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Inquest on a Movement

DAVID MARQUAND analyses Labour's Defeat and the consequences

". . . I take no pleasure in the analysis sketched here. . . . I would find it horribly painful to have to accept the notion that the Labour Party has now outlived its usefulness. . . . The facts point in that direction. I still hope that, by some miracle, the party can return to its old vocation as the chief vehicle of radical reform. But the chances do not seem to be good. . . ."

Gillian Tindall
Story

Jean-Marie Benoist
Interview with Lévi-Strauss

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Berlin, Belgrade

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Edited by Melvin J. Lasky & Anthony Thwaite

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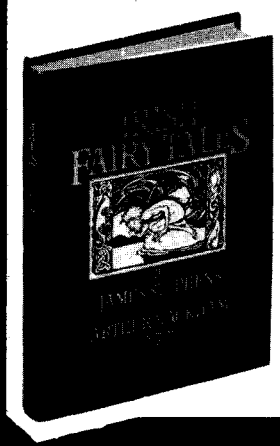

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Gillian Tindall

The Other Railway Children

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP my mother and I lived on the fringes of Kentish Town in north London, but we called it "Highgate Rise" because my mother thought it sounded nicer.

This was about 1950, long before such districts had become visible to the kind of people who want to live there now. When mother and I lived on the edge of it, the holes left in the terraces by incidental bombs were still open to the sky, and that sky was still tainted by the smoke of the steam trains that ran over and through and under the district, making it an unattractive one for people who could afford something better.

It was not a *bad* district, my mother used to assure the occasional relative-in-law visiting suspiciously from the country: not bad, merely "a bit slummy in parts", going down rather, not what it had once been of course . . . "not really what I would have wanted for us in ideal circumstances, but"—and here mother always assumed the conscientiously bright and matter-of-fact air considered suitable at the time for war-widows—"After all, we're quite all right up here, a good half-mile from Kentish Town, quite near Parliament Hill really and the air's much cleaner up here. Margie and I don't often go into Kentish Town, actually: just on Saturdays, to go to Daniels or BB Evans. . . ." My mother, by insisting too much, ended up sounding as if she were apologising for something, when, if she were right, no apology was necessary.

The ostensible reasons why she and I had moved back to London after the War were, firstly, to be near my grandmother, secondly that my mother might have more choice of jobs (she was a teacher), and thirdly that I might, when I was older, attend the Camden School for Girls, which was said to be "Mixed" socially but "very sound academically." However I was years away from the age at which Camden might accept me, and the real reason for our return to the City from the impeccable air of Wiltshire (where my dead father's family lived, ensconced in a conviction of rural superiority) was that my mother was a Londoner by birth and upbringing, and, whatever she pretended, felt most herself there.

She had sisters and cousins scattered all round unattractive, comfortable inner-suburbs, and on Saturdays and Sundays or in school holidays we would take one of the Secret Railway trains that ran in hidden loops between these suburbs, describing great arcs through half-perceived hinterlands to link places otherwise unconnected: you could go from Frognal, by leafy Hampstead, to Dalston Junction where "the slums" reputedly were; from Richmond in the sunset west to Barking in the far east. It was even said that you could go to the Isle of Dogs, which I imagined to be a kind of Hesperides.

Even then, the several lines concerned, with their unobtrusive chocolate-brown stations situated between shops or under bridges, were known collectively as The Secret Railway. Their real name was and is the North London Railway, I believe; but, omitting to get themselves incorporated into the District or Metropolitan system at some crucial date earlier in the century, the lines had languished, gradually declining in usefulness, known only to local people. They had missed suburban electrification too: small black tank engines of antique design still hauled their few carriages. Their stations had all the appurtenances of the full-blown Victorian railway—Waiting Rooms, including sometimes a separate one for Ladies, cavernous lavatories, station masters' offices, coal tips, water towers, sidings. And yet their total mileage can only have

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been a fraction of that covered by the tube lines that had superseded them, and their routes mapped dead social patterns. True, mother found it useful for visiting her sister May in Leytonstone, but who in Frognal, even in my childhood, wished to go to Dalston Junction? Our own station, Kentish Town, was particularly spectral, since the main line north from Euston also ran through it, and its rustic-wooden walls were ornamented with posters advertising the Flying Scotsman or the air of Carlisle, but the idea that you could actually travel from here to there was almost entirely a fantasy, for hardly any of the main-line trains stopped there.

RECENTLY I TRAVELLED on the Secret Railway again. I had not been on it for well over twenty years. As in a dream, the line was the same and yet not the same, of today and yet of more than one past period also. As in a dream, too, chronology semed to have become confused and compressed; it was as if I was travelling through the memories of more than one generation.

The steam engines were gone, of course, and some of the old stations had been reduced to boxy ciphers of their former selves, little more than bus shelters. But others still spread their sooty brickwork and wooden footbridges enticingly beyond the rain-blurred glass. The wet soaked into the old, decorative boards as it had always done, a hundred years of rain gradually turning the timber back into a natural perishable thing like a forest tree. The waste lands beside the tracks that had fascinated and repelled me as a child were still there, and so were the rain-pocked reservoirs that were like a great eastern sea. ("That's the Lea Valley, Margie." Oh infinite world!)

The enamel station names were still there, in the colours of a long-extinct company, and even some of the weak gas lights, prisoners with their little chains; but already in my childhood these things had been obsolescent, at variance with what I knew as Now. For even then a ride on the Secret Railway had bought me fleeting whiffs of a London that was by then past or passing: the train would rattle by tiny backyards ("Are those the slums, Mummy?") where zinc baths hung on nails, or would rush abruptly from tunnels to afford an abrupt, overhead view of a street with trams, stalls with flaring lights, before extinguishing the vision again in further walls of velvet soot.

Now, as I sat there as an adult, racked through those same tunnels, over and under those unchanging iron bridges, where buildings wheeled and rose and died, time receded in vertiginous perspective through the unwashed train windows. It was not merely my childhood that met the train, ran alongside it and swung away again, it was my childhood's own half-perceived past, some undated but ancient point beyond the rain where alien people in heavy dark clothes led lives weighted with unreachable meaning. Then the train was out into another landscape, and I had lost their trace again.

"Mummy, who are those children out there?" I had been wondering for some time, but had not asked. Now, as the train was drawing into Kentish Town and my mother began gathering up our belongings, with a child's sense of mistiming it occurred to me to put the question. Perhaps I hoped that if I distracted her from what she was doing it wouldn't be Kentish Town next and the journey wouldn't have to end.

"What children? . . . Put your pixie hood on, Margie, it's parky outside." I balanced my disliked pixie hood on top of my head, and continued:

"Who are they, Mummy?"

"Who are who?"

"The children. Outside the window. Only they've gone now." We were drawing into the platform. Their tense, pale faces had been replaced by those of the Bisto Kids, careering archly on a full-sized hoarding, and at once their reality began to fade: I was not sure I had really seen them.

"There aren't any children", said my mother firmly. "Put on your hood, I said."

IN THE DAYLIGHT, I never saw them. Only in the dark, on the homeward journey from Leytonstone, and only intermittently, bobbing there in space beyond the train windows.

"Mummy, the children are there again. . . . Look."

My mother looked. At that moment we entered a tunnel.

"It's just your reflection", she said when we

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came out. "Look! There's your green jersey and there's your hair ribbon. Did you think it was another child?" Fondly.

I was no longer sure. It was true, I could see my own reflection as Mother spoke. But a moment later the two—or was it three?—children were back instead; one of them, a girl, seemed to be mouthing something at me.

"Look", I said without conviction. "There they are again."

"I've told you", said my mother with unyielding, teacher's patience, "That's just your own reflection." She bent over her knitting.

I stared at the white face framed in untidy hair that seemed to be speaking to me, and it stared back, mute now. Perhaps it *was* me? With a child's uncertain self-image, I was prepared to believe it, since my mother seemed so definite about it. I was even prepared to believe that the other two smaller children—there did seem to be two—appearing uncertainly behind her, were somehow variants on myself as well: it was confusing, with so much thick glass, and the lights from the streets we were now passing throwing counter-shadows. One of the two seemed to be a small boy in a balaclava helmet like Kentish Town children wore. His nose was running. The other appeared very young, a baby really.

SOMETIMES THE CHILDREN seemed to be crying, mouths gaping soundlessly against the cold, dark air. At other times they seemed to be jeering at me, the untidy little girl especially, as some rough children in Highgate Road once had when I was out buying a loaf of bread for my mother. I developed a phobia about the Railway Children—as I confusedly called them in my mind, having E. Nesbitt's book at home—and wouldn't sit by the window on the return journey. And sometimes I didn't see them at all.

"They weren't there, they've gone", I told my mother confidently as we walked hand in hand from the station back up the Highgate Road to gentility and home.

Her reply was non-committal, but the next time we were in Leytonstone for tea I heard her engaging Auntie May in a muttered conversation about "too lively an imagination" and "night fears" and having "managed to deal with it." And Auntie May—she taught gym in Chingford—said more loudly that it was much the best thing, to deal with them, and that everyone knew only children tended to be prone to these things.

"It isn't my fault she's an only child, May", said my mother rather sharply, and I felt sorry for my mother who was usually so cheerful, and cross with Auntie May for making her sound like that.

On the journey home we had reached the open expanse of the reservoirs when I became aware that the faces were, after all, there again in the windy wet dark, soundlessly weaving and jerking with the train's motion. Because they were reflections (but of what, of what?), they were transparent and patchy like some ill-exposed negative. Many years later I saw a 19th-century glass-negative of a family of beggar children rescued by Dr Barnardo, and for a breathless second or two recaptured exactly the impression of those children beside the train, till adult consciousness erased the perception and I found myself dating the children's clothes and noting how poised and stilted the little group looked.

In childhood, however, there can be no such flight into inessentials. I screamed in fear and buried my head in my mother's lap.

"Margie, stop this! There's nothing there. Look—" She reached over to pull down the window by its leather strap. I screamed again, clutching hysterically at her arm. Fortunately South Tottenham station saved us. The children didn't seem to like stations. They were creatures of the railway waste-lands: they lived—I was by now convinced—in the narrow strips of sodden, rank grass between the line and the back of the next gardens, scrap yard or allotment; they roamed the cindery wastes of disused sidings, where empty brick buildings raised their blank or broken windows and where, on a few scummy, water-filled bomb craters, pieces of rubbish floated in black, cryptic shapes. And like these forlorn territories of theirs, the children exuded menace but also pain, physical and spiritual. Was that snot or blood that ran continually from the small boy's nose? And why did the girl, who seemed to be the ring-leader, have one hand and arm in bandages? Mother and I moved our seats, and quite a lot of people got on at South Tottenham. The children were wary of other people. They went away and did

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not come back, that time.

We did not go to Leytonstone for several weeks after that. Mother said the weather was "rather bad" and we would wait till the days were longer. I was unfamiliar with this expression, and it puzzled me rather, Meanwhile, till time should thin and elongate itself like a piece of elastic, she bought me a bottle of Parrish's Chemical Food, which I was supposed to drink through a straw because otherwise it would blacken my teeth. It did not, but being (I suppose) largely composed of iron, it made me constipated, so my mother purchased an equally large bottle of Syrup of Figs. Thus, encouraged over the telephone by her sister May, she did her conscientious best to improve my physical and mental state.

My grandmother said I ought to be wearing long stockings. Bare knees in winter weren't right—she'd always said so, particularly for a highly-strung child like me.

With my attention thus morbidly directed to my own state of health, I wilted consciously and gave myself airs. I was almost disappointed when, on the next return from Leytonstone through the dusk of early spring, the children were not there. I actually gazed into the mauve, light-pricked twilight trying to see them.

I DID SEE THEM AGAIN, once, weeks later, but this time I was unprepared. It was in Kentish Town High Street one Saturday. Mother and I had been, perhaps, buying fish from Carters, and possibly a new Enid Blyton book for me from Bishop and Hamilton, and now maybe we were buying some narcissi from a barrow by the station when suddenly I saw them. But this time they were real.

The two bigger ones, the girl and the boy, were dragging after a youngish drab-looking woman who was pushing the baby in a dreadful old pram. The baby was sucking a dummy. The little boy's nose was running as usual, and he seemed to be crying. The girl was crying more loudly and apparently angrily. She beat her hands, both bandaged and unbandaged, against her mother's arms. The woman thrust her aside and pushed the pram on. She seemed not to be looking at Kentish Town at all, but to have her pale eyes set on some dreary inner vista. Her meagre face, with its forlorn mouth and sharp little chin, was like the girl's; it seemed inadequate on an adult, as if she had been precipitated into that category and it was quite beyond her capabilities.

They were far off, and I could not hear what the girl was crying out, but they were my Railway Children.

I did not point them out to my mother. But when we got home I cried and refused my lunch and said I felt sick. Later, to console myself, I purloined and ate quite a lot of sweets.

I overheard my mother saying on the telephone to Auntie Lily, her more sympathetic sister in Brondesbury, "I'm afraid I really will have to take a firm line with her. . . ." Such were the stock phrases of that time. We have others now, but it makes little real difference for the children themselves.

AS AN ONLY CHILD and one avid for further information about the way adults spent their time, I was an inveterate eavesdropper, a reader of anything left lying about. Recently I had begun to read the old-fashioned local newspaper we took, not because I was really interested in most of the petty crime, weddings, whist drives and Council decisions it described, but because I enjoyed the sensation of being given a glimpse into other's obscure lives, as when from a moving train we look momentarily down into a garden or yard or in at a lighted window.

So was it perhaps in a newspaper, local or national, that I read something?—A story that abruptly made sense to me, fusing with my own perceptions to form a pattern of menacing clarity? I have sometimes, as an adult, played with the idea, imagining plausible headlines, trying to convince myself that I once read them:

"Children Dead by Railway Line—
Mother Sought"

Or (in the local paper)—

"How Did These Babies Die?
North London Line Mystery"

Then, maybe a day or maybe many days later, they said something like—

" 'I was Desperate'
says Train-Babes Mother"

Or—

"Three Children Flung from Train:

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'I did it' Mother confesses"

Or simply—

"Kentish Town Mother Murders Three"

(The invention of such banners is, today, my job; the machine runs smoothly.)

It is all quite plausible, and perhaps, even now, if I were to take a train—a modern tube train—to the Newspapers Library in Colindale, and search industriously in the appropriate years, I would come at last to such black confirmatory headlines, familiar as in a repetitive dream, across paper not yellowed as old newspapers are supposed to be, but white from being so long in a shut file, a memory untouched, its content of fear unworn by use and time.

Perhaps. But perhaps not. Really, I do not know if I learnt the story from a newspaper at all. Perhaps I merely gleaned it from some overheard conversation between my mother and grandmother or my mother and a sister. Perhaps, even, I misheard part of a tale and invented the rest from my too-lively imagination (aided by Parrish's Food and Syrup of Figs) and an embryo journalist's need to turn diffuse, uncertain experience into a coherent drama.

But whence the experience? Why the fear, the obsession, why the children out there anyway?

Adult reason suggests no answer to this, unless it is the common-sense possibility that in fact I had heard or read of some gruesome local tragedy *before* I embarked upon my private dramas in the train, and that memory has simply rearranged the sequence into a more artistically meaningful pattern.

I know this is the most likely supposition. But I do not *feel* it to be true. Memory may be fallible, invents, suppresses and disguises, but the basic sense of an event or period remains. And imprinted into my memory is the sense of swelling fear and foreboding, of a horror yet to come, some obscenity from that other world of slums and not-nice people from which my mother so resolutely turned her face. And when it came, or when I knew—when I saw or heard or vaguely understood that some alarming event had taken place and was now past—then the fear subsided again. I knew; and it was over.

The human brain, a young neurologist I was interviewing told me once, does not seem, as far as we can tell at present, like a machine for creating thought waves. "It looks", he said ruminatively, "more like a sophisticated kind of receiving set. . . ."

RECENTLY, AS I SAID, I travelled on the Secret Railway again. "The downtrain to childhood", I thought, storing it away as a nice neat phrase to use sometime. I half hoped, as I sat down (on a new, inferior and bus-like seat) that through some enduring brick arch or from a high embankment with a view over muddy playing fields, I would glimpse the world as it seemed when I was young, pregnant with strangeness, reverberating with others' destinies. Perhaps a dog, galloping, one ear blown back, across a desolate park—perhaps a dangerous-looking child running madly away from the fence as the train approaches—would catch me up and carry me away with them into another place. Perhaps in a dingy, lighted window as we creaked past, destructively near, the curtain would pull aside, exposing at last to my dazed eyes the truth about other people's lives. As an inexperienced child I had seen death beyond the train's darkened windows. What might I not see, now that I knew so infinitely more?

But the train simply trundled in its wide arc across districts without meaning, and I understood at last that there were no mysteries left to be penetrated. All I could learn, I knew. And if there was something more, I would never learn it.

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David Marquand

Inquest on a Movement

Labour's Defeat & Its Consequences

IN CLASSICAL TRAGEDY, the hero is brought down by the interaction between his own *hubris* and an avenging Fate. By that definition, at any rate, Labour's defeat in the general election can fairly be described as tragic. It is true that Mr Callaghan's humiliation in the two Devolution referendums—the trigger that precipitated the election at the worst possible time for his party—owed less to *hubris* than to panic. Labour would not have been savaged by the Scottish and Welsh nations in 1979 if it had not run away from the Scottish and Welsh Nationalists in 1974; had it not been so savaged, it would still be in office today. But the results of the Scottish and Welsh referendums, and the parliamentary manoeuvring which followed, were only the symptoms of a much deeper malaise.

The Scottish and Welsh voted as they did because the case for devolution was put, without conviction, by time-servers and party *apparatchiki*, who had jumped on to the band-wagon at the last minute, in order to dish the Nationalists, while the case against was put, with verve and passion, by honest men, who put their principles above their party. Much the same was true of the general election six weeks later. The Conservatives' arguments for a change of course were crude and over-simplified, reflecting a naive, blinkered and unconvincing view of the world. But they were at least arguments. Labour did not argue. It replied with a display of grandfatherly complacency about the country's existing course, tinged with a kind of weary pessimism about the possibility of change. Complacency and pessimism alike, moreover, bespoke a moral and intellectual vacuum which the party was manifestly incapable of overcoming. And for that fatal incapacity, *hubris*—albeit *hubris* of a rather complicated kind—*was* largely to blame.

As everyone knows, the Labour Party started life as an alliance between the trade unions and the Socialist sects which had grown up in this country at the end of the 19th century. What is less often appreciated is that a third ingredient had to be added to the mixture before the party could become a serious contender for power. That third ingredient was the Radical intelligentsia, which had provided the intellectual underpinning for Lloyd George's social reforms before 1914, but which deserted to the Labour Party after 1918, in disgust at the cynicism and opportunism of the Lloyd George coalition. Radical intellectuals did not bring many votes to the Labour Party, but they brought something more important. They could write; they could argue; some of them could even think. Above all, they could and did lay down the intellectual framework within which the battle for votes took place. They asked the questions which the politicians had to answer: and, in asking the questions, they helped to determine what the answers would be.

They were given a warm welcome. Lord Haldane, Asquith's old comrade-in-arms, became Lord Chancellor in the 1924 Labour Government. Sir Charles Trevelyan, Noel Buxton and Christopher Addison, all former Liberal politicians, all held Cabinet office in the 1929 Government. After the 1931 split, the role of the Radical intelligentsia in Labour politics became even more obtrusive. Though he would probably have repudiated the description, Clement Attlee—old Haileyburian, former L.S.E. lecturer and East End social worker—was himself a rather unusual example of the species. So, more obviously, were Dalton and

DAVID MARQUAND *was Labour Member of Parliament for Ashfield from 1966–1977, when he left this safe seat (majority over 20,000) to join the staff of Roy Jenkins, the newly appointed President of the European Commission in Brussels. His scholarly study of "Ramsay MacDonald" (1977) was acclaimed as a masterpiece of political biography. He is now a Professor of Contemporary History and Politics at the University of Salford, and his latest book, "Parliament for Europe", was published this spring by Jonathan Cape.*

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Cripps. Hugh Gaitskell, Attlee's successor as party leader, was a Radical intellectual to the fingertips. Even Harold Wilson, in spite of his strange habit of disguising himself as a self-made North Country businessman, was a Radical intellectual at the beginning of his career. It was the same story lower down the party hierarchy. Crossman, Crosland, Jenkins, Jay, Gordon Walker, Healey—the list seems endless.

And all this symbolised a fact about British politics which, when I was an undergraduate in the '50s, had almost achieved the status of a law. The Tories were the stupid party. The cleverer you were, the more likely it was that you voted Labour.

That fact was one of Labour's main assets. A Labour Party without the Radical intelligentsia—a Labour Party with no Attlee, no Dalton, no Cripps, no Gaitskell, no Crossman, no Jay, no Gordon Walker, no Crosland, no Jenkins—might have held on to its working-class fortresses in the coal-fields and the industrial cities, but it would never have won the socially-mixed marginal seats which it has to win if it is to have a decent parliamentary majority. In any case, it would have been a kind of political dinosaur, all brawn and no brain; and even if it had sometimes contrived to win power, it would not have had the remotest idea of what to do with it. Above all, it would not have enjoyed the moral ascendancy which comes from being the party of the *Zeitgeist*. For the creed of the Radical intelligentsia—an amalgam of Keynesian economics, Hobhousian New Liberalism and Fabian collectivism, which can best be described as welfare-state social democracy[1]—was the dominant political creed in this country from the early '40s until the mid-'70s. It was not an exclusively Labour creed, of course: Harold Macmillan, R. A. Butler and Iain Macleod all put its precepts into practice at least as faithfully as any Labour politician ever did. But its most articulate and convincing champions belonged to the social-democratic wing of the Labour Party; and, since Labour generally appeared to be under the control of its social-democratic wing, this gave the party an aura of moral respectability which was denied to its rival.

EVEN IN OFFICE, the Conservatives were morally on the defensive; even in opposition, Labour occupied the moral commanding heights. Thus, Labour Governments operated within much wider margins of tolerance than those available to Conservative Governments. It was legitimate for a Labour Government to move beyond the frontiers of social democracy in a socialist direction. As poor Mr Heath discovered between 1970 and 1972, it was not legitimate for a Conservative Government to move beyond them in a neo-liberal one. When a Labour Government was stopped from doing what it wanted by the City of London, decent people were shocked. When a Conservative Government was stopped by the National Union of Mineworkers, decent people applauded. Labour Governments got the credit for good, social-democratic intentions even when they failed to carry them out. Conservative Governments were denied the credit for solid, social-democratic achievements that stood indisputably in the record. In spite of Labour's dismal economic performance from 1964 to 1967, and the consequent collapse of the social programme on which it had fought the 1964 and 1966 elections, most Radical intellectuals rallied to its banner again in 1970. How many acknowledge that two of the most impressive social-democratic achievements of the last 40 years—the Butler Education Act and the decision to implement the Robbins Report—were the work of Conservatives?

IN THE MID-'70s, however, the *Zeitgeist* began to turn traitor. Welfare-state social democracy was a creed of abundance, presupposing economic success. Its appeal was dimmed by the economic failures of the last decade-and-a-half, and still more by the fact that those failures took place under predominantly social-democratic régimes. At the same time, the version of welfare-state social democracy practised in this country since the War ran out of moral steam. The predominant elements in that version were Keynesianism and Fabianism—both manipulative creeds, which held that society could be reformed only from above; the New Liberal inheritance, with its emphasis on moral persuasion and individual autonomy, was neglected by comparison.[2]

Perhaps because of this, welfare-state social

[1] The best recent analysis of this amalgam is in Peter Clarke's *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge University Press, 1978).

[2] Professor Robert Skidelsky argues in his "Keynes and the Reconstruction of Liberalism" (ENCOUNTER, April 1979) that Keynes wanted to leave individuals with as much liberty as possible, and, by implication at any rate, that Keynesian economics is further away from Fabian collectivism than I have suggested. The crucial point, however, is that Keynes's economic theories could only be put into *practice* by a suitably enlightened Government, not by ordinary people.

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democrats behaved, all too often, less like liberators, trying to give ordinary people more control over their own lives, than like nannies determined to scrub recalcitrant humanity behind the ears. They seemed more anxious to do good to others than to help others to do good to themselves. Their characteristic instruments were centrally-operated controls, complex bureaucracies and big investment projects, not local initiatives, innovating individuals or small cooperatives. At the same time, they assumed instinctively that the way to promote social welfare was to spend public money on it. More fatally still, they also assumed that the more money was spent, the more welfare would result.

Three consequences followed. *The first* and most obvious was that the so-called "social wage" bit more and more deeply into the individual wage, so that the individual wage earner was forced to behave in a more and more inflationary fashion, in his capacity as a trade unionist, to preserve his personal disposable income from the depredations of the tax collector.

The second was that ordinary people became more and more alienated emotionally from the structures originally created in order to improve their lot. Welfare-state social democracy eradicated many of the cruelties and injustices of the past, but in doing so it created a vast, exasperating network of controls and a vast, exasperating army of petty officials to administer them. Workers no longer go in terror of the sack. But council-house tenants can be forced to accept home improvements which they do not want, parents can be forced to send their children to schools of whose teaching methods they disapprove, small businessmen can be driven into bankruptcy or fraud by the attentions of the Customs and Excise, women can be deprived of social security benefit on suspicion of having a lover, householders can be prevented from building a garage at the whim of the Planning Department, and tracts of unspoilt countryside can be devastated at the behest of the Road Construction Unit. Thirty years ago, when the welfare state was new and popular memories of the "bad old days" were fresh, complaints about the extravagance, inefficiency and insensitivity of the public sector came overwhelmingly from the "old" middle class, whose status and values had been threatened by its growth. Since the late '60s, the loudest complaints have come from working-class voters, in revolt against the clumsiness and inflexibility of the bureaucracy which they see as having been set in authority over them.

THE THIRD CONSEQUENCE was more complicated. Not only did the social wage bite more deeply into the individual wage; in doing so, it broke the moral mainspring of the post-war social-democratic system. Individual wages are spent by individual persons on the goods they decide to buy of their own free will. The social wage is spent by the state, without taking account of the wishes of the individuals from whose pockets the money is collected.[3] Though the more atavistic social democrats in the last Government seemed incapable of realising the fact, it follows that if the social wage bites into the individual wage—if, to put it more pompously, resources are transferred from private consumption to public consumption—the individual wage earner will lose some of the freedom which he would otherwise have enjoyed.

HE MAY, OF COURSE, be better off in other ways. There *are* genuinely public goods, which can be provided only by the public sector; and a wide range of other goods, though not public in the strict sense, can in practice be provided more efficiently or more equitably by the public sector than by the private sector. But the loss of freedom which takes place when private individuals are compelled to hand part of their incomes over to the state is still a loss, and has to be balanced against the gains. A society in which 50 per cent of the gross domestic product is spent by the state may be healthier, better educated or more equal than a society in which the state spends only 30 per cent of GDP. But it will also be less free, and it is humbug to deny the fact.

It follows in turn that, at any rate for those who value individual freedom, there are moral limits to the growth of the public sector as well as economic and political limits. Whether those limits have yet been reached is a matter for debate: the Conservative claim that they have been, though apparently accepted by the electorate, is far from self-evident. But even if they have not been reached already, it is clear that they must be reached sooner or later—and sooner rather than later—if the public sector continues to expand as it has done over the last 20 years. The inescapable conclusion is that the old, Croslandite assumption that the central purpose of social democracy is to increase the social wage as rapidly as possible, on which welfare-state social

[3] In theory, Parliament is supposed to feed individual preferences into the spending process, through its control over public expenditure. The sad failure of the House of Commons Expenditure Committee to do anything of the kind proves, I think, that the job is impossible.

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democrats of all parties used to act in practice even when they did not promulgate it as a principle, has now collapsed. And although few Labour ministers acknowledged the fact, its collapse had become apparent to such social democrats as were capable of simple arithmetic well before Mr Healey was forced to trim the public sector borrowing requirement by the IMF.[4]

THE NET RESULT of all these changes was that welfare-state social democracy slowly lost the moral and intellectual ascendancy which it had first acquired in the early 1940s. Increasingly, it was forced on to the defensive, both against an aggressive, if somewhat inchoate, neo-Marxism on its left, and against an equally aggressive, and much more precisely focused, neo-liberalism on its right.

So far, moreover, the attackers have displayed much more *élan* and self-confidence than the defenders. The founding fathers of welfare-state social democracy—Hobhouse, Hobson, the Webbs, Beveridge, Keynes and the rest—were, above all, optimists. They believed that Reason could be harnessed to Will to improve the human condition: that the conventional wisdom of the day could be defeated by demonstrating that it was mistaken: that vested interests could be overcome by appealing over their heads to a public opinion which could be persuaded by rational argument: that although change was difficult, it was both possible and necessary.

Today, the boot is on the other foot. Social democracy—at any rate in its orthodox, post-War version—*is* the conventional wisdom. It is the neo-liberals and neo-Marxists on the far right and far left of the spectrum who believe in the possibility of change. The characteristic tactic of the social democrats in the centre is to explain, with a kind of knowing fatalism, why changes cannot be made. Since everyone can see that changes of some sort are desperately needed if this country is to survive as an advanced industrial society, this has given an enormous moral advantage to the proponents of foolish and dangerous changes. The Benns and the Josephs have rushed in where the Callaghans and the Whitelaws have feared to tread: it is because the Callaghans and the Whitelaws are so obviously reluctant to make any moves, in any direction, that the Benns and the Josephs have found followers.

[4] Cf. Mr Roy Jenkins's Anglesey speech, in January 1976, warning that, because of the growth of public expenditure, this country was now reaching the "frontiers of social democracy."

NOT ALL OF THIS can be laid at Labour's door. The Labour Party has been in office for a total of 17 years since the end of the War. So has the Conservative Party. The most incompetent Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 34-year period was the Conservative Lord Barber. The clumsiest exercise in centralising social engineering was the "reform" of local government, carried out by the Conservative Peter Walker. But although others besides the Labour Party are to blame for the economic failures and bureaucratic excesses which helped to bring about the change in the *Zeitgeist*, only Labour is to blame for the way in which it has responded to the change.

A sensible party, confronted with the breakdown of the assumptions on which it had operated for 30 years, would have started to revise its assumptions and to look for new ways of realising its fundamental values. Recognising that the version of welfare-state social democracy practised in this country had run out of steam, such a party would have tried to hammer out a new version, appropriate to the problems of the present and future rather than to those of the past. Accepting that the old equation between Government Spending and Social Welfare no longer held good, it would have tried to promote new forms of self-help, and to find new criteria for determining where the frontiers of the public sector should be placed. Knowing that social democracy should be about freedom and autonomy as well as about equality, it would have set its face like flint against further extensions of corporate power, and concentrated on finding ways to decentralise decision-making—to workers' cooperatives and small firms in industry, to parents in the school system, to patients in the health service. Realising, above all, that adaptability is the key to survival, and that intellectual vitality is the key to adaptability, it would have done everything in its power to strengthen its alliance with the Radical intelligentsia, to foster new thinking and to encourage those who could provide it.

THE LABOUR PARTY did none of these things. So far from revising its assumptions, it clung to them with increasing desperation the more obviously they needed revision. So far from developing a new and more libertarian version of social democracy, it drove the old, bureaucratic version harder than before. The Labour Governments of 1964–70 and 1974–79 spent huge quantities of legislative time and public money on extending the frontiers of the centralist state, and on strengthening the positions of its corporatist allies on both sides of industry.

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They did little or nothing to give ordinary citizens more say in the decisions that shape their lives.

The steel, shipbuilding, and aircraft industries were nationalised—and nationalised, moreover, in the old, bureaucratic Morrisonian way. A plethora of Boards, Commissions, and Corporations was set up. New complexities were added to what was already one of the most cumbersome taxation systems in the world. The comprehensive revolution in education—which, if it had been allowed to proceed slowly and sensitively, might have gone far to undermine Britain's stifling class system—was forced through so intolerantly and so clumsily that its net effect was to strengthen the private sector and widen class differences. Enormous bribes were paid to private companies to induce them to do things which they would either have done unbribed or which they would have been wiser to leave undone. New privileges were given to an overmighty, undemocratic and illiberal Trade-Union Establishment.

But no effective steps were taken to foster producer cooperatives in healthy sectors of the economy, to promote workers' participation in the management of industry, to reform the antiquated and oppressive Official Secrets Act, to make parliamentary scrutiny of the executive less of a fiction, to give parents more say in the education of their children or council tenants more say in the running of their estates, to make nationalised industries

Words are Bullets are Ballots

MORE THAN *most politicians, it is difficult to judge how far Mrs Thatcher really means what she says, and what will be the consequences if she does.*

Most of her deepest grievances against Socialism are shared privately by most of Britain's middle class; they are the kind of complaints to be heard at any suburban dinner party in England—ailing schools, falling standards, death of incentive, lack of law and order.

They hark back to a Mrs Miniver vision of England, cheerfully resisting the philistine hordes in the name of decency and cottage gardens. Mrs Thatcher's favourite text is the Kipling verse that begins:

> At Runnymede, at Runnymede,
> Oh hear the reeds at Runnymede;
> You mustn't sell, delay, deny,
> A freeman's right or liberty . . . .

If the new Prime Minister attempts to convert a romantic vision directly into practical politics she will be confronted by a formidable section of the population, to whom all this is cant from a language they have never learned.

Max Hastings
in the EVENING STANDARD

"I WILL SAY *to the lads, come on—get your snouts into the trough."*

This unthinking threat by Sid Weighell, leader of the National Union of Railwaymen, about what he would tell his members to do if the Conservatives win the election, must have brought Jim Callaghan out in a cold sweat of fear.

Mr Weighell is an old-fashioned trade union organiser to whom modern PR politics mean nothing. He thinks in crude black and white terms. He gives vent to his thoughts in simple phrases. He is incapable of dissimulation or subtlety and unaware of the terrifying potency of words.

Professional politicians learn by bitter experience that words are magic, for good or for evil. Many of them carry deep scars left by past semantic folly. They know that a brilliant slogan at the crucial moment can tip the electoral scales—and that a few, ill-chosen words, eagerly amplified by the enemy, can start a stampede of frightened voters.

Most politicians, even the greatest, have had an ill-chosen phrase hung around their necks, like a decaying albatross, for the rest of their political lives. Asquith had to live with "Wait and see", which turned him into a figure of dithering indecision.

No one knew the value of words better than Churchill. Yet he, it is said on the advice of Lord Beaverbrook, another expert wordsmith, lashed out in the 1945 election against "Labour's Gestapo." That witless jibe cost the Tories incalculable votes.

Harold Macmillan's albatross is that luckless Americanism, "You've never had it so good", which he inserted in a sensible passage specifically warning people that the prosperity they now enjoyed was hard won and easily lost. Instead, it was used ever after to brand him as an exponent of feckless materialism and improvidence.

Harold Wilson's verbal Waterloo—his "Pound in your pockets" TV broadcast after devaluation—was coined, or so Wilson claims, by an earnest Treasury mandarin, anxious to clarify the public's confusion about what devaluation actually meant. Instead it was interpreted as a deliberate and characteristic attempt, by a master of deception, to conceal the reality of economic defeat.

Sid Weighell's blunder is of truly vintage quality. It is hard to imagine a phrase which more expressively conjures up the image of British trades unionism as depicted by its harshest critics.

The trotter-and-trough image is particularly damaging because it evokes the ferocious pigs of George Orwell's Animal Farm, and reminds us that the year of his sinister predictions, 1984, will be on us before the new Parliament runs its course. Above all, it thrusts before our eyes one of the most vivid of all Biblical pictures; the Gadarene swine, possessed by devils, hurling themselves in collective destruction over the cliff. Not hard to name the devils today: wage-claims, destructive strikes, union power.

Paul Johnson
in the DAILY MAIL

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more responsive to their consumers or to free local government from the apron strings of Whitehall. It is true that the 1974 Government did, in the end, grasp the nettle of Scottish devolution. But, as we have seen, it did so only at the eleventh hour and only to dish the Nationalists. The notion still ran strongly against its centralist grain; and, as a result, the scheme finally produced was a logical absurdity, defensible only as the thin end of a wedge which might one day lead to something else. Forty years ago Keynes described the Labour Party's official ideology as "moss-grown demi-semi Fabian Marxism." The moss has grown longer since then, but otherwise nothing has changed.

PART OF THE BLAME lies with the party leadership. In the late '50s and early '60s, Hugh Gaitskell tried to seize his followers by the scruffs of their necks and carry them willy-nilly into the second half of the 20th century. But although he and his friends in the social-democratic right of the party could normally count on sufficient trade-union support to control the annual Conference and the National Executive, the trade-union Establishment did not support them in the battle over Clause Four.

Few trade-union leaders really believed in public ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, or imagined that any conceivable Labour Government would actually carry out the party's theoretical commitment to the public ownership of production, distribution and exchange. But fewer still were prepared to break explicitly with that commitment. For them, Clause Four had a symbolic significance, not an operational one. It did not portend action in the future: it was a reminder of heroic struggles and sacrifices in the past. They saw Gaitskell's attempt to remove it from the party constitution as an act of sacrilege, akin to the colonel of a famous regiment urging his officers to tear up its battle honours or to the head of a noble family urging his children to dance on the ancestral grave.

Lacking trade-union support, Gaitskell had to retreat, with only a bloody nose to show for his pains. Since his death, the party leadership has been determined, above all, to avoid a similar experience; and it has believed, almost certainly correctly, that the best way to avoid one is to allow sleeping ideological dogs to lie. Thus, for more than 16 years, the party leadership has thrown its considerable weight behind the doctrinal *status quo*; and one of the reasons why the party has failed to revise its assumptions is that the leadership has made it plain that one of its primary aims is to prevent anything of the sort from being done.

BUT ALTHOUGH THE LEADERSHIP bears some of the responsibility for the doctrinal sterility which has characterised the Labour Party for the last ten years, and which allowed the Conservatives to win the electoral argument by default, it is not the sole, or even the chief, culprit. The leadership is, after all, elected by the Party and removable by the Party. Sir Harold Wilson was leader of the Labour Party for 13 years because, for 13 years, his parliamentary colleagues either wanted him to be leader, or did not want to remove him strongly enough to do anything about it. Mr Callaghan has been leader for three years for the same reason.

If the party had wanted to revise its assumptions, it would have done so, leadership or no leadership. Indeed, if the party had wanted to do so the leadership would have responded to its wish. The reason the leadership was so anxious to let sleeping ideological dogs lie was that it could see that that was what the party wanted it to do. The reason, for that matter, that the leadership *was* the leadership—that Sir Harold Wilson and Mr Callaghan were elected in the first place—was that the party wanted a quiet doctrinal life, and voted accordingly: that the party was anxious, above all, to keep the old show on the old road in the old way, and thought that Sir Harold and Mr Callaghan were more likely to do this than their rivals.

This does not exculpate them, of course. Doctrinally, as well as in more obvious ways, leaders are supposed to lead; and there is no denying that Sir Harold and Mr Callaghan both failed conspicuously to provide the doctrinal leadership which their followers so badly needed. The fact remains that the chief responsibility for their party's doctrinal nakedness rests with the party itself, not with them.

THIS IS WHERE *hubris* comes into the story. The Labour Party failed to revise its assumptions partly because it did not want to and partly because it was not able to. Both these failures—of will and of capacity—had their origins in a strange, inward-looking proletarianism, which became increasingly prevalent in the parliamentary party and in the party headquarters in the late '60s and '70s, and whose proponents imagined that the "Movement" had no need of ideas or intellectuals, and could rely

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exclusively on the strong right arm of the working class. It was a mood, not an ideology, this proletarianism—a smell in the air, not a text on paper—and it is correspondingly difficult to analyse or even to describe. But the attempt must be made, for it holds the key to one of the most unfortunate, and at the same time one of the most important, chapters in the recent history of the British Left; and, so far at any rate, it has received much less attention than it deserves.

It can be approached at two levels, one cultural and emotional, and the other ideological and political. At the first level it takes the form of what might be called the "cult of the tea room"—a defiant assertion of a (frequently bogus) working-class identity; an equally defiant rejection of what are seen as middle-class values and middle-class models of behaviour; and a sometimes quite virulent personal animus towards fellow party members who display middle-class tastes or middle-class values.[5]

It is true, of course, that a middle-class style has always been apt to raise eyebrows in some quarters. Hugh Gaitskell was criticised for spending too much time with the "Hampstead Set." Aneurin Bevan's obvious enjoyment of the good things of life shocked his colleagues in the Miners' Group. After 1931, Ramsay MacDonald's political stand was explained away by an elaborate theory of social seduction. But although the proposition cannot be proved statistically, I am morally certain that the cult of the tea room became more widespread and more aggressive during my own eleven years in the House of Commons and that the cultural and emotional proletarianism of the '70s is a quite different phenomenon from its analogues at earlier periods of Labour history. Gaitskell's partiality to the "Hampstead Set" may have upset some of the more censorious members of the Tribune Group, but none doubted that recruits from a background like Gaitskell's were assets to the party or that they should be welcomed if they joined it. Ramsay MacDonald's aristocratic friendships set some tongues wagging even before 1931, but the upper- and upper-middle-class Radicals who flooded into Labour politics in the '20s were received with open arms.

The proletarianism I am trying to describe is far narrower and more exclusive. The central tenets of the "cult of the tea room" are that the Labour Party is, or at any rate ought to be, not merely a predominantly but an exclusively working-class party: that the working class can be properly represented only by people of working-class origin, who alone understand its aspirations and have its interests at heart: that middle-class recruits to the party, so far from being assets, are liabilities, who have no rightful business in it and who, if they do manage to join it, ought at least to keep their origins dark: and that the elaborate intellectual constructs of the middle-class Radical are therefore, at best, unnecessary, since the party can be guided much more satisfactorily by the gut reactions of its working-class members, and at worst positively dangerous, since they may lead the party away from its working-class roots.

I DO NOT, OF COURSE, SUGGEST that any Labour MP would ever put such propositions into words, or even that any Labour MP consciously believes anything of the kind. But what is under discussion is an attitude of mind, the implicit logic underlying a mode of behaviour and style of discourse, not a set of consciously-held propositions; and the attitude at issue shines through the behaviour, the rhetoric, and even the actions of a steadily growing section of the PLP.

It explains, for example, the peculiar virulence of the Common Market split, for the leading pro-Marketeers were not merely right-wingers: they were mostly middle-class right-wingers. It explains the venom with which the party machine pursued Dick Taverne, for Dick Taverne was not merely a dissenter: he was a dissenter who had been to a public school and who owned a yacht. It explains the metamorphosis of the second Lord Stansgate into Mr Tony Benn, for Mr Benn, though also a public-school boy, is a public-school boy with his ear to the ground, who knows that the derision of the capitalist press is a small price to pay for the liquidation of an upper-middle-class image. It explains the career of Dennis Skinner—a perfectly intelligent and reasonable human being in private, who has deliberately cultivated a parliamentary style of mindless incivility, and who has now been rewarded with a seat on the National Executive. It explains the remarkable political novel, *Grass Roots*,[6] published a couple of years ago by Mr Skinner's parliamentary neighbour, Joe Ashton—the chief message of which is that middle-class Labour politicians are all phoneys, careerists and reactionaries, with no real concern for their con-

[5] The tea room of the House of Commons is where the trade-union group congregates. The assertion of working-class identity is frequently bogus because the number of Labour MPs from working-class occupations is actually declining.

[6] Joe Ashton, *Grass Roots* (Quartet Books, 1977).

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stituents. It also helps to explain the leadership election of 1976, the negativism of the subsequent Callaghan Government and the general election result of May 1979.

FOR THE PROLETARIANISM of the last ten years is a political as well as a cultural phenomenon. It therefore has to be discussed on a political as well as on a cultural plane. Its origins as a political phenomenon lie, it seems to me, in two separate but connected series of events. The first is the struggle over Barbara Castle's notorious white paper, *In Place of Strife*, and the much uglier struggle over the Conservative Government's Industrial Relations Act which followed a couple of years later. The second is the Labour Party's defeat in 1970, and the subsequent victories of February and October 1974.

There has always been an element of tension in the relationship between the industrial and political wings of the Labour Movement. The unions have frequently chafed at the constraints imposed on them by their membership of a political party which can win and hold power only if it wins the support of non-unionists. The party leadership has frequently been embarrassed or exasperated by union actions in the industrial sphere. But for 40 years or so after the defeat of the General Strike in 1926 the relationship was fairly stable. The party leadership knew that it needed trade-union money to finance the party machine and trade-union votes to control the party conference. The unions knew, or thought they knew, that in a show-down between themselves and the Government of the day, the Government would win; and that it was therefore more important for them to have a friendly Government in power than to have complete freedom to pursue their industrial objectives as they wished. Thus the unions needed the party leadership as much as the leadership needed them. For it was only by getting the leadership into office—and the best judge of how to do that was presumably the leadership itself—that the unions could be sure of having a friendly Government.

THESE ASSUMPTIONS were beginning to wear thin even in the '50s, for the Churchill and Macmillan Governments were so anxious to appease the unions that they slowly began to erode the notion that the unions had more to gain from a Labour Government than from a Conservative one. In the '60s, they were shot to pieces. In the first place, the Wilson Government was, if anything, less friendly than its Conservative predecessors had been. Secondly, and much more importantly, the battle over *In Place of Strife* showed that the unions could defeat the Government of the day after all—at any rate, if it was a Labour Government. The '70s reinforced the lesson and made it universal. The Parliamentary Labour Party fought the Heath Government's industrial legislation line by line and clause by clause, and succeeded only in making itself look ridiculous. The Act, however, was made totally inoperative because the unions refused to operate it. The obvious moral was that parliamentary action was less effective than industrial action; and, therefore, that the unions needed the party much less than they had imagined.

At the same time, the 1970 defeat suggested—or, at any rate, was thought to suggest—that the party needed the unions much more than it had imagined. Why, after all, had Labour lost? The obvious answer was that the effects of the economic mismanagement of the period from 1964 to 1967 had been only partially corrected in the period from 1967 to 1970, and that the measures needed to correct them had necessarily been extremely painful.

But that answer was both embarrassing and unpalatable; and it is scarcely surprising that most Labour people should have sought a less painful alternative. The alternative they found—and it was one for which the election results provided at least some justification—was that the party had lost because "our people" had deserted it: because traditional working-class Labour voters, alienated by wage restraint and anti-union proposals, had stayed at home: in other words, because the party leaders had had the temerity to differ with the trade-union Establishment, which understood, better than the party did, what made working-class voters tick.

This alternative explanation was made still more plausible by the victories of 1974. The February election, after all, was a sort of 1926 in reverse. Once again, the miners had taken on a Conservative Government. But whereas they had been humiliatingly defeated in 1926, in the last analysis because the other unions were not prepared to wage industrial war *à l'outrance* against an elected Government, in 1974 they were triumphantly victorious—and not only on the industrial ground where they knew they were strong, but on the Government's chosen electoral ground as well. In both the February and the October elections, moreover, Labour had fought on the ticket of total identification with the TUC. And, lo and behold, it had won!

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The proletarianists, it seemed, had been proved right: and right electorally as well as emotionally. The clever people, the intellectuals, the claret-drinkers, the barristers, the academics, the frequenters of London clubs, the article-writers and television-appearers, with their glib phrases and their disloyal attitudes, their outside interests and their European friends, had been shown up. The party did not need them, after all. They were surplus to requirements: superfluous baggage on the Movement's back, which it could, if it wished, shrug off at no cost to itself. What you had to do to win an election was to keep in with Jack Jones. The Radical intelligentsia could jump in the river.

THIS WAS, NO DOUBT, a superficial analysis, even then. The real point about the 1974 elections was not how well the Labour Party had done, but how badly. In February 1974, in spite of the almost unbelievable ineptitude with which the Heath Government handled the mining dispute, the Conservatives actually won more votes than the Labour Party. In October, despite the manifest disarray of the Opposition and a blatantly vote-catching budget from Mr Healey, Labour only just managed to nose ahead of the Conservatives. But in politics, moods matter more than facts; and there can be no doubt that the two 1974 elections gave an enormous fillip to the proletarianist mood I have been trying to describe. There can also be no doubt that, partly because of this, that mood played a decisive part in the 1976 leadership election. For the real point about the 1976 contest was not that Mr Foot secured an alarmingly high vote, as some commentators imagined, or that the eventual victor was a man of the right, as others believed. It was that, for the first time in its history, the party had chosen as its leader the candidate who had least in common with the Radical intelligentsia, and rejected the candidates who had most in common with it.

Not all of Mr Callaghan's predecessors have been Radical intellectuals, of course. But whenever the party had a choice, it always chose a Radical intellectual, or the nearest equivalent to a Radical intellectual, in preference to the other candidates. This was true of Wilson's election in 1963, of Gaitskell's in 1955, of Attlee's in 1935 and of Ramsay MacDonald's in 1922. It could have been true of 1976 as well. Roy Jenkins and Tony Crosland were perhaps the two most outstanding Radical intellectuals of their generation. Denis Healey, though not an intellectual exactly, is a formidably intelligent man. Tony Benn and Michael Foot, though not Radical intellectuals in the sense in which I have been using the term, can certainly be classed as Socialist intellectuals. But in spite of this array of talent, the party chose Mr Callaghan instead—and it chose him precisely because he would not upset the tea room, because (in Mr Peter Jenkins's immortal phrase) he was the "Keeper of the Cloth Cap", the man who could best be relied upon to keep the party close to its proletarian roots.

AS THE PARTY HAS SOWN, so it has reaped. Mr Callaghan was a much better prime minister than I thought he would be. He was more honest, more courageous and had a better grasp of immediate issues. The tragedy is that honesty, courage and even a grasp of immediate issues are not enough—or not, at any rate, at a time of rapid change, when old assumptions have broken down and old paths lead nowhere. But in voting for Mr Callaghan, the party voted for the old assumptions and the old paths; and, once he was there, the forces which had put him there ensured that he would not break away from the implicit ticket on which he had been elected.

In theory, no doubt, he could have betrayed the tea room in the way that de Gaulle betrayed the *colons* or Harold Wilson the Tribune Group. But that was a theoretical possibility only, not a real one. Mr Callaghan would not have wanted to betray the tea room in any case; even if he had, he would not have been able to. Just as the *hubris* of a classical hero was part of his doom, a gift of Fate which he could not escape any more than he could escape the punishment for it, so Labour's *hubris* in spurning new ideas at the very point when it most needed them sprang inexorably from the interplay between the character of the party and the character of the problems it faces. Labour spurned new ideas because it knew in its bones that worthwhile new ideas would tear it apart. New ideas do not, after all, appear out of nowhere. They require an open-minded and self-critical climate, in which there are no taboos against free enquiry and no sacred cows which cannot be slaughtered. In such a climate the two great myths of creed and class, the myths which hold the Labour Party together, would be dissolved.

THE FIRST OF THESE MYTHS says that the differences between the party's socialist and social-democratic wings are matters of emphasis only, and that the political cleavage which matters is the

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cleavage between Labour and the other parties, not the cleavage between Left and Right of the Labour Party. The second says that "our people", the unionised working class, have more in common with each other than they do with anyone else.

Neither myth has ever been wholly true, of course. Even in the early years it would have been absurd to pretend that Sidney Webb, say, was closer ideologically to James Maxton than to Seebohm Rowntree, or to Beveridge, or even to Lloyd George. It would have been equally absurd to pretend that a skilled compositor had more in common with an unemployed labourer than with a small shopkeeper or garage proprietor. But in the early years of the party the myths were close enough to reality for the inaccuracies not to matter. Those who looked forward to complete public ownership of the means of production, and those who merely wanted what would now be called a mixed economy, might have had different long-term aims, but they had the same aims in the present and foreseeable future. Though the gulf between skilled and unskilled was, if anything, wider and deeper than it is today, it nevertheless made sense to depict the entire working class as a great army of "have nots" confronting a small minority of "haves."

None of this is true today. The gulf between socialists and social democrats is now the deepest in British politics; and it concerns the immediate decisions which Governments have to take week by week as well as the fundamentals of political and social theory. The dividing line between "haves" and "have-nots" cuts right through the working class itself; and the chief operational function of the old cries of working-class solidarity is to enable the "haves" to defend their differentials against the "have-nots."

On incomes policy, prices policy, taxation policy, trade policy, industrial policy and European policy, the socialist and social-democratic positions are not merely different, but irreconcilably opposed. The private sector of the British economy is now so weak that a few more steps in a socialist direction might take it over the frontier. In these circumstances, the only possible strategy for a consistent social democrat who accepts the mixed economy as an end in itself and not merely as a half-way house on the road to socialism is to strengthen the private sector, to increase the share of the national income going to profits and to tie Britain more firmly to the rest of the capitalist world. The logical strategy for a socialist must be to do the opposite—to extend the public sector still further, to make what is left of the private sector still more dependent on the state, to squeeze profits still more, to insulate the British economy from the rest of the capitalist world by means of import controls, and to take Britain out of the European Community.

To pretend, in this situation, that socialists and social democrats are all part of the same great Movement—that Shirley Williams and Bill Rogers and Roy Hattersley really have more in common with Tony Benn and Eric Heffer and Stanley Orme than they do with Peter Walker or Ian Gilmour or Edward Heath—is to live a lie. But it is a lie which the Labour Party has to live if it is to live at all.

SELF-DECEPTION OVER IDEOLOGY, moreover, has to be buttressed by self-deception over class. The Labour Party is, after all, a class party. Its name proclaims the fact, and its constitution confirms it. Poll after poll has shown that its working-class supporters vote for it not because they agree with its policies or share its creed, but because they see it as "our" party: the party of "us" in a world of "us" against "them." To proclaim, in these circumstances, that the world of "us" against "them" no longer exists, that we are now living in a world of "us" against "us", in which the interests of the "affluent workers" are opposed to those of the poor, would be to destroy the party's electoral base. But it is true all the same; and unless that truth is acknowledged, no attempt to revise the party's traditional assumptions will get very far.

WHAT, THEN, IS TO BE DONE? I take no pleasure in the analysis sketched out here. Political allegiance is a matter of emotional loyalty at least as much as of conviction, and my emotional loyalties are to the Labour Party. I would find it horribly painful to have to accept the notion that it has now outlived its usefulness; and although I can see that the facts point in that direction, I still hope that, by some miracle, the party can return to its old vocation as the chief vehicle of radical reform in this country. But the chances do not seem to me good.

Traditional, post-War social democracy can be revised in the way I think necessary only if the revisionists are prepared to offend virtually every centre of power in the Labour Movement. The social-democratic wing of the party has never been prepared to do that in the past, and it is hard to believe that it will suddenly change the habits of a lifetime now. Under Gaitskell, it is true, it did try to revise the party constitution. But in Gaitskell's day

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it had the leadership on its side. If a similar attempt were made today, the leadership would be bitterly hostile.

In any case, the kind of revisionism which is needed now would cut much deeper than Gaitskell's did. He was merely trying to persuade the party to abandon socialism in favour of social democracy. What is needed now is to abandon both socialism and the kind of social democracy we have known since the war, and to do so in a way which would upset the old Right of the Labour Party at least as much as it would upset the left. So far, however, the social democrats have been careful not to upset the old Right. Their chief aim has been to prevent the party from falling into the hands of the Left; and they have correctly calculated that the only way to do that is to build a coalition of all the anti-Left forces in it.

But that strategy is clearly incompatible with thoroughgoing revisionism of the sort now required. It means placating David Basnett, where revisionism would offend him as much as it would offend Arthur Scargill. It means concentrating on winning a majority on the National Executive, where revisionists would try to free Labour MPs from control by the National Executive through primary elections or proportional representation. It means coaxing the centre of the parliamentary party into voting for the Manifesto Group's candidates for the Shadow Cabinet, where revisionism would almost certainly throw the centre into the arms of the Left.

In the long run, the old strategy will have to be abandoned if the social democrats are to stand for anything worth fighting for. But all the short-term arguments are in favour of maintaining it; and, in politics, the short term nearly always looms much larger than the long.

FOR ALL THESE REASONS, I do not believe that the job of revising traditional welfare-state social democracy can be done within the formal framework of the Labour Party or that active Labour politicians can contribute much to it. It may one day be possible to put a revised version into practice through a revitalised Labour Party. More probably, a new structure will be needed instead. But, as George Woodcock once pointed out, structure should be a function of purpose. The task now is to work out what the purposes of a new-model, libertarian, decentralist social democracy ought to be, leaving questions of structure and political strategy until later. It is, God knows, an urgent one.

"Dejeuner sur l'Herbe"

The gentleman in blue
With a splash of ocean
On his coat and bowler
Appears out of humour.

We marvel at ribbons,
Such suave grey silks, gesture
Of gloves like tree blossom.
The vivid view charms us.

Trouser-deep in green
He wants to see faces
Not the lit difference
Of dresses out of doors.

This posing in sunlight,
Cream strokes on crinoline,
Bores him. He half suspects
They will stand there for good.

Patrick Hare

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INTERVIEW

Claude Lévi-Strauss Reconsiders

From Rousseau to Burke—By JEAN-MARIE BENOIST

YOU HAVE SAID *in various books and articles that ethnology today, and your own work in particular, is no longer addressed to your contemporaries. Yet I notice that in a recent essay on human freedom—as well as in your studies on* Race and History *and* Race and Culture*—without trespassing on philosophic ground, and by posing questions and problems, you make extremely topical remarks on the preoccupations of your own time. How do you reconcile these two positions?*

THERE *may well be something "very French" about dramatic intellectual reconsiderations, perhaps ascribable to the fact that their language tends to such easy clarities and their minds to facile finalities. Who in Paris, at least since the days of Montaigne, has not been tempted to follow belief with doubt, to reconsider and reformulate, and to replace old theories with new hypotheses? Over recent years the world-famous French anthropologist* CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS *has been changing his mind—about Marxism, Structuralism, Universal Human Rights, the merits of Rousseau and Edmund Burke, etc.*

JEAN-MARIE BENOIST, *who conducted this interview, is often included in the group of "nouveaux philosophes" of recent French ideology. He is maître assistant at the Collège de France and author of "The Structural Revolution" (Weidenfeld, 1978), of "Nouveaux Primaires" (1977), and of "Pavane pour une Europe défunte" (1978).*

ENCOUNTER *has published previous talks with Lévi-Strauss, by George Steiner (April 1966) and John Weightman (February 1971). Lévi-Strauss' best-known work, "Tristes Tropiques" ("A World on the Wane", 1961), first appeared in these pages in three instalments* (ENCOUNTER, *February–April 1961).*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: Neither *Race and History* nor the more recent text on freedom arose out of any initiative on my own part. The first was in response to a request from UNESCO, the second to an invitation from the President of the *Assemblée Nationale* to make a deposition before the Commission on Liberties. In both cases I tried to provide what was expected of me, rather than getting carried away.

—All the same, those texts and the stands you take are extremely relevant; all the more so, perhaps, because you wanted to adopt this attitude of reticence compared with the rather moralising, preaching attitude of today's philosophers. You reject any abstract and universal definition of freedom, preferring concrete definitions instead. Similarly, you propose that human rights be considered not as the rights of a moral person but, on the contrary, as the rights and duties of a being living in a living world.

LÉVI-STRAUSS: I don't think there is anything paradoxical about the first point, since I have simply adopted an ethnological viewpoint. In other words *les libertés*—whatever it is that the members of a given society care about most deeply—essentially consist in a certain number of possibilities and activities and concrete attitudes, all rooted in the past of a particular society, and consequently not susceptible to definition in the abstract. We observe them in the context of one social experience or another. From that point of view it is indeed an ethnological matter.

—Before coming to the question of "the rights of man as a living being", perhaps we might pursue this theme of freedom. In your definition you seem to be aligning yourself more with a particular English tradition of analysis than with the altogether a priori *notion put forward by French theoreticians of freedom from Descartes to Sartre.*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: What you say is borne out by the fact that, although in France there has been no reaction to my deposition before the Commission

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of the *Assemblée* and to my subsequent article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the article does seem to have made some impact when it came out in translation in England. The English recognised certain familiar themes and thoughts, which possibly hark back to Burke, but which gave French readers the impression of something extraneous, *un corps étranger.*

—A "foreign body" that enables us to see that you put more trust in history and tradition than in reason and human nature . . . which is quite in keeping with an ethnological point of view. You describe societies containing "micro-solidarities" and "short-range allegiances" which are borne along by history, and you reconcile this approach with a political and philosophical viewpoint which is close to Montesquieu's. So it might be doubly true to say that your references to l'histoire *and* la tradition *on the one hand, and to Montesquieu on the other, are not totally foreign to French thought.*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: Certainly not. But they were very quickly displaced by another current of thought, that which stems from Rousseau in the *Contrat social* and opened out into the political philosophy of the French Revolution, the same current which goes back past Montesquieu to Cartesianism.

Now this current is the dominant one, and it still shapes the thinking of our contemporaries. It is, let us say, *l'esprit de système* applied to political and social realities—and I think that nothing is more perilous.

—So you feel uneasy about that "spirit of system" (including its contemporary totalitarian developments) but not in the name of a sort of pessimism, or nihilism of submission, or of useless rebellion, but in the name of quite solid "values" which are precisely those principles of the Separation of Powers (in the case of Montesquieu) and of those "micro-solidarities."

LÉVI-STRAUSS: The idea of small checks and balances, *des petits contre-pouvoirs*, seems to me the most profound aspect of Burke's thinking. But in my own case I note a sort of convergence: encounters—accidental or perhaps not so accidental, I don't know—between my profession as an ethnologist, which has made me responsive to the concrete facts of life in society, and on the other hand a personal experience, a very distant one, of my own vague leanings towards political action.

When I was a student, and even when I was still at *Lycée*, I was active in the Socialist Party, which was then called the SFIO *(Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière)*. I even held office: I was general-secretary of the Federation of Socialist Students. Like all my comrades, around the 1930–35 period I was a pacifist, and then I lived through *la drôle de guerre*, the "phoney war", and the French collapse; and I realised that it was a big mistake to pigeonhole political realities in the framework of formal ideas. Perhaps this was possible during a relatively short period in the life of our own societies, when intellectual thought and politico-social events were able to converge sufficiently for the people to feel that the ideologists spoke for them, while the ideologists themselves had the feeling of being in tune with a certain reality and its development through time.

For a great many reasons I am afraid that today's world, because of its density and complexity, the incredibly high number of variables it involves, has ceased to be thinkable, at least in any all-inclusive way.

Like most of us, I continue to react politically to events, but I have become aware of the skin-deep—or, if you prefer, visceral—character of those reactions, and that my position as an intellectual does not invest me with any special authority carrying the right to proclaim them from some soap-box for the edification of my contemporaries. Furthermore I do not think that the life of societies, the aspirations of men and women in a given society, can be interpreted in accordance with a kind of universally applicable grid.

THAT MUST tend to fracture some people's image of an ideology stemming from your method of ethnological analysis: Structuralism. You may well be perfectly faithful to what you have undertaken and what you have achieved on the theoretical level in that method. But it is good to realise, if I may say so, that the method leads you to a politico-ideological conclusion exactly opposite to the "spirit of system" which your method has been accused of underwriting or preserving.

LÉVI-STRAUSS: There is a total misunderstanding here. It has to do with the objection about history that has been levelled against me so often, and that claims that I "ignore history", that it does not interest me, whereas on the contrary I read historical works with a great deal more interest than philosophical books or novels. History gives me the feeling of extending the ethnographical experience. When I read accounts of a certain period of our own history or the history of other societies—at the moment it happens to be Japan, because I'm just back from there—I have the feeling that every slice of historical development affords something original, irreducible, quite comparable to what the ethnologist goes in search of in very remote societies.

The only history that interests me is a concrete history, made up of a multitude of little events whose *raison d'être* we can understand with hindsight, although it would have been impossible to foresee that some would occur rather than others.

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The pretensions I have rebelled against were not those of the historians but those of certain philosophers of history who in place of this fluctuating, elusive, unforeseeable reality of historical evolution substitute a system and an ideology.

—And it is in the name of this kind of dispersed history, capable of taking account, if not of chance, then of the contingent nature of these various events, that you deduce not "une théorie de la liberté" *but a* position *on various freedoms. . . .*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: It is not a "theory" at all, and I do not want to give these observations an exaggerated importance. I repeat, I ventured to make them because I was urged to do so; I probably would not have produced them spontaneously. But I do think that nothing is more dangerous than attempting to define Western societies (and then, by extension, the whole corpus of human societies, including those studied by ethnologists) in terms of a kind of code of abstract liberties which would probably be meaningless for many of them, while for others it contradicted their own lived experience. The exercise of liberties does not happen in a vacuum but in relation to traditional attachments, which very often have irrational roots. It is these that form the social fabric, here as elsewhere.

—This "intervention of the irrational" which militates against an all-embracing rationality is a very interesting argument.

LÉVI-STRAUSS: It's not an argument, it's a fact. History is irrational. All societies are irrational, or contain a vast irrational element, and it would be as absurd as it would be dangerous to choose to ignore this, and to set down on paper the outlines of a totally rational society. Society cannot be like that, no society ever has been, and we have come to terms with this.

—When, in a more general way, you describe that multitude of minor solidarities which preserve the individual from being ground up by society as a whole, and that society from being pulverised into interchangeable and anonymous atoms, isn't there in the definition of these adherences and solidarities (each of which integrates these liberties and these cultural codes) the definition of an equilibrium?

LÉVI-STRAUSS: Yes, but it seems to me that this would amount to a commonplace. I am not the first to say, and probably won't be the last to observe, that the evolution of our big modern societies tends to pulverise the intermediary settings and contexts, to reduce individuals to interchangeable atoms, to dispossess them in favour of a centralised, faceless power.

That seems to me to go without saying. At a rather more theoretical level these practical kinds of consideration bring us back to what I once called (when trying to define the aim of ethnology so as to distinguish it from researches of a more generally sociological character) "levels of authenticity", by which I mean those lesser levels still discernible even in our own society, where the relations between individuals stand on concrete bases. At the level of village or parish life, for example, where it is not solely or particularly a question of deciding in the abstract, but in relation to Pierre, Paul or Jacques, with all their idiosyncrasies, interests and biases, and where collective living consequently rests upon an authentic perception of its reality and its very truth. And it seems to me to be a matter of regret that what still exists on the level of communal life, which I see as what is most fruitful in our contemporary societies, should no longer exist at other levels.

AND THIS *leads you to regret the disappearance of what you call "those infinitesimal privileges", those possibly derisory inequalities which (without contravening general equality) enable individuals to find the closest points of anchorage.*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: I mean that in the traditional type of society individuals belong to a multitude of lesser orders—familial, professional, local, religious, corporative—and therefore have (or used to have) the feeling that they occupy a very precious position, and are different from others; they have a sense of performing an irreplaceable function, of possessing an originality of their own. Perhaps each considers his position superior to that of his neighbours—not because it carries any power of coercion or exploitation, but simply because it implies a few tiny differences to which there attaches what I would call a quasi-aesthetic value.

As an example, take a visit I made recently to Wajima, a small coastal town on the Sea of Japan, which is one of the principal centres of the lacquer industry (or craft, rather). For four days I actually lived with the lacquer craftsmen there, most of them very young. On the day before I left we all got together at a dinner where all the professional specialists were present, from the wood-turners who shape the objects, and the craftsmen who add the lacquer coating by a series of complex operations, to the true artists who decorate them and who are themselves divided into several specialities which do not all require the same virtuosity. When I asked if certain crafts had any feeling of superiority towards others, they at first protested that they were all "indispensable" and that they all felt "equal." Then I inquired whether any proverbs or sayings expressed the professional pride of each group and disparaged the next. Dozens of examples

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poured out straight away. Even if a certain egalitarian ideology represented the official attitude, it was clear that each group remained traditionally attached to its own special and irreplaceable role in an overall process.

Any kind of enduring social life depends on the perception of these sorts of distinction—and also on an attachment to these distinctions on the part, not of individuals as against other individuals, but of individuals resumed within a framework, feeling a solidarity with other individuals acting in the same way in the same form of work, and contrasting themselves with others within those terms.

—So this notion of the individual that you turn to in pointing the contrast with the total and totalising society is really somehow overdetermined, you could say, by these multiple differences.

LÉVI-STRAUSS: I think that in any case there is nothing more tragic than *une société globale*, a total society consisting of nothing more than a herd of individuals. For the very protection of those individuals, I see intermediary bodies as indispensable.

—Which puts you much more on the side of Montesquieu, whose political philosophy is a landscape peopled by those "corps intermédiaires." *It also makes you slightly disloyal to Rousseau.*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: There's a sort of paradox here. Rousseau, for whom I feel something that I would almost call veneration, whom I feel so close to, and visualise as *un intime*, was in my opinion deeply mistaken in his political theory. Perhaps it is for that reason that I feel very close to him. He teaches me by his own example that the intellectual, *qua* intellectual, when he comes to grips with problems of this order has to exercise a special kind of vigilance over himself.

I would like to add a confession. This kind of intimate relationship that I enjoy with Rousseau is one I also feel with Chateaubriand, who is the contrary of Rousseau, yet the same. So the person I feel closest to is neither Rousseau nor Chateaubriand but a kind of chimera, the Janus figure constituted by the Rousseau-Chateaubriand dyad, which offers me the dual aspect of the same man, though they made diametrically opposite choices.

—Which makes itself felt in their writing. . . .

LÉVI-STRAUSS: Of course, for Rousseau and Chateaubriand are probably the two greatest writers of French prose. In quite different ways, of course, but the full splendour of the French language is also illustrated in the Rousseau-Chateaubriand dyad. So it is not a particular truth, or the expression of a particular truth, which attracts me. It is, rather, the expression of a complexity, a body of contradictions in which we live—in which I live, at any rate. It is the feeling of this contradictory situation—contradictory within the *œuvre* of Rousseau, contradictory when you put the *œuvres* of Rousseau and Chateaubriand together—it is in this contradiction that I myself feel caught; and that is why I feel close to them.

—Is it contradiction which takes "the dialectic" as a way of thinking? Can you still be faithful to the theses you have offered, influenced as they were by teachers who were geologists, psychoanalysts, and Marxists?

LÉVI-STRAUSS: Oh, those were features of my intellectual biography, if I can call it that.

DOES "THE DIALECTIC" *make it possible to think through the contradiction which lies at the heart of Rousseau's work? Or is that contradiction quite beyond the grasp of "dialectical reason"? If you consider, for example, the ideal dimensions for free and democratic societies, Rousseau locates them in small societies where exchanges still happen within speaking distance.*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: There we come back to the *niveaux d'authenticité* we were talking about. Obviously a society of the order of magnitude of a village or parish is not at all the same entity as our enormous contemporary societies. I believe that one of the cruxes of our political thinking is that we continue to live against an ideological backdrop devised in the past to fit either theoretical societies or real ones—none of which were comparable, either in degree of complexity or in order of magnitude, with the societies to which we ourselves belong.

—Are you saying—unlike Rousseau, who wanted to revert to the state of small, integral communities—that a certain restoration of partial societies offers the last chance of giving a little health and vigour to ailing liberties? You have even given a kind of minimal threshold for the existence of these optimum societies. It is as if only groups of 40 to 250 members were viable.

LÉVI-STRAUSS: I have not suggested that the big Western societies should break up into small communities of 40 to 250 people! I am quite aware that that is inconceivable. I have simply cited observations made by ethnologists about the most rudimentary societies we know, which seem unable to keep themselves going above a certain extremely low threshold. They break up rather than expand. The break-up has to happen if they want to stay faithful to the same formula. This is to suggest no more than that at different stages of social life there

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may be certain numerical optima; I don't claim to have made a law of it.

THIS CONCEPTION *of "liberties" taken concretely in context (which goes hand in hand with your definition of Structuralism as reconciling the tangible and the intelligible) leads you to criticise those excessively universalist and ultimately ethnocentric concepts of Human Rights on the grounds that they are tied to a Western conception of human nature. You propose, in a fairly firm and pragmatic fashion, to replace our notions of Human Rights with "the human person conceived as a living being"....*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: I have said it again and again. What strikes me in our society is the literal veneration with which we surround certain syntheses of high complexity and uniqueness. I mean the works of great artists—painters, sculptors, musicians. To contain them we build museums which are akin to the temples of other societies. We would think it disastrous, a universal catastrophe, if the entire works of Rembrandt or of Michelangelo were to be destroyed. We would feel—quite rightly, of course—that something irreplaceable had gone.

But when it comes to those infinitely more complex and infinitely more irreplaceable syntheses which are living species, whether plants or animals, we act completely irresponsibly, quite casually. It's just possible to imagine that if the entire *œuvre* of Rembrandt disappeared, another painter might appear whose work would, in a different way, succeed in filling that void—a purely theoretical hypothesis, I know, and more than improbable. On the other hand it is totally (and, this time, I would say metaphysically) out of the question that a vanished plant or animal species could be replaced by an equivalent species on the time-scale of human existence. That is the starting point of the train of thought you have alluded to.

The rights that can and must be ascribed to man are only a special case of the rights which must be ascribed to the creative power of life. For man possesses rights only to the extent that he manages to realise on the individual scale what nature realises in the form of living species.

—Are you not close here to certain philosophical or religious theses stemming from the Far East? When you define man as a participant in creation rather than its master, you are advancing a critique of classic Cartesian conceptions of the mastery of creation, and of the overwhelming desire perpetually to transform that creation.

LÉVI-STRAUSS: I have often been accused of being "anti-humanist", but I don't believe it is true. What

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I have stood out against, and what I regard as being deeply harmful, is that kind of humanism run riot which derives (on the one hand) from the Judaeo-Christian tradition and (on the other, and closer to ourselves) from the Renaissance and from Cartesianism, which makes man into a master, an absolute lord of creation.

I have the feeling that all the tragedies we have lived through—first with Colonialism, then Fascism, then the Nazi Extermination Camps—all of that counts not against or in contradiction to the alleged humanism we have practised for several centuries, but I would say rather as its natural extension. Because in some way it was one and the same impulse—it made man start by tracing between himself and the other living species the frontier of his own rights—and then go on to shift that frontier inside the human race, separating certain categories, recognised as the "only truly human" ones, from others which then undergo a demotion determined on the same lines as those used to discriminate between human and non-human living species. Here is the true original sin that drives humanity to its own destruction.

Respect for one's fellow men cannot be based on certain special dignities that humanity claims for itself as such, because then one fraction of humanity will always be able to decide that it embodies those dignities in some pre-eminent manner. We should rather assert at the outset a sort of *a priori* humility. If he started by respecting all forms of life in addition to his own, man would be shielded against the risk of not respecting all forms of life within humanity itself.

—Is this, then, the definition of an ethic which does not take as its source man the universal rational individual, but rather this "humilité principielle" *which will be his guiding light. . . ?*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: Humility in the face of life, because life represents the rarest and most astonishing creations observable in the universe.

The great model is the world and nature; and when I say *le grand modèle* it is not only the representative but also at the same time the aesthetic and moral model.

—And yet in this model, in nature (as the works of Konrad Lorenz and others have shown), violence and the seeds of destruction are immediately present. This is perhaps even more to be feared than man's will to change "nature." Do you accept this lesson too?

LÉVI-STRAUSS: First of all I think that Lorenz's work, which I very much admire as long as it confines itself to animal ethnology, often becomes suspect in its philosophical and sociological ambitions. Wouldn't it be possible to derive the very opposite lessons? Lorenz himself contrasts human aggression, or more precisely man's perversion of it, with the aggressive instinct in its normal, natural form. Without turning a blind eye to the aspects which you are right to stress, they do not seem to me to be comparable in magnitude with the intensity of devastation and the scope of destruction that man inflicts on nature. After all, these evolutions and transformations—which do contain their share of violence—have always culminated in a certain regained balance. It is nothing like the kind of Gadarene drive towards disequilibrium that the fraction of nature that is man is now introducing into nature.

IS IT, *then, your firm belief that with your present UN project France is presented with a unique opportunity to establish "Human Rights" on bases which, except for a few centuries in the West, have, explicitly or implicitly, always been accepted everywhere?*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: Don't forget that this was only a deposition to the Commission on Liberties. I don't know what the result will be; but at the time I appeared before the Commission I had been vexed by some new legal proposals which, whatever party they came from, were not in the least concerned to re-think the problem.

For my own part—and bearing in mind the Utopian character of my own line of thought—I would have been tempted to make a sort of metaphysical leap, and rather than extend the scope of the old Human Rights declarations, which haven't been much use, to reconstruct the notion of liberty on different foundations.

—A sort of Copernican revolution?

LÉVI-STRAUSS: That is exaggerating. But at any rate a disruption of various well-entrenched mental attitudes, which it would have been illusory to expect of a political Commission.

—And when you advocate a right of "the living being" more than of the Kantian moral person, which is too bound up with the Western conception, that seems to you to depend rather on a mutual consent, a universal participation by the various peoples?

LÉVI-STRAUSS: It seems to me that in place of an originally Western (and therefore rather recent) conception of Human Rights it might have been possible to try to put ourselves on an equal footing with the explicit or implicit ideas which other civilisations have developed on this problem. As an ethnologist I cannot forget that, as you were saying

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just now, the great civilisations of the East or the Far East, with Buddhism and other spiritual families, are not only open to this kind of thinking, but have been grounded on it for millennia.

Even the so-called "primitive" peoples studied by ethnologists have a deep respect for plant and animal life. This respect is expressed among them by what we consider as so many superstitions. But they do in fact constitute very effective curbs for maintaining a certain natural equilibrium between man and the environment he uses. We might have arrived at some sort of philosophical consensus more easily that way than through the really naïve illusion of trying to lay special claim to the privilege of alleged Western-based truths, as if it were up to us in particular to confer upon others the rights arising from it.

—Yes, but some of those Asian or other cultures which have produced ideologies respectful of human nature as participating in nature have often gone hand-in-hand with political despotisms. In that shadow the Western notion of Human Rights has no longer been seen as an "abstract universal" but as something very concrete and singular, something urgent and valuable.

LÉVI-STRAUSS: I have the feeling that with my proposed change of perspectives we would actually be a lot stronger in fighting such abuses and helping the peoples you have in mind to struggle against despotism.

But I do not believe that there is any kind of link or solidarity between those philosophical ideas and certain political formulas which have cropped up along the by-ways of history. It was not Buddhism that gave rise to Maoism! Maoism set itself up in opposition to the traditional concepts, as the Cultural Revolution showed.

—Agreed. But I was suggesting that this notion of "Human Rights", even as defined in its recent Western guise, might still serve as a kind of lock or brake on the expansion of despotisms.

LÉVI-STRAUSS: Look, it isn't that I was proposing to discard the Western philosophy of Human Rights. I was only proposing to give it a firmer and a broader base. . . . What I think, if you like, is that to be concerned with Man without being simultaneously concerned, as a matter of solidarity, with all the other manifestations of life is, like it or not, to lead humanity into becoming its own oppressor, and to open the way to self-oppression and self-exploitation. Incidentally, this idea of man as master and sovereign owner of nature *(l'homme maître et souverain possesseur de la nature)* seems to me to be much more strongly embedded in the despotisms you have just mentioned than in the liberal societies, or at any rate equally strongly.

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—To the very extent that we have often passed on this legacy to those same despotisms, it is we who are, as I said just now, its propagating agents.

LÉVI-STRAUSS: In my view, Marxist, Communist, and Totalitarian ideology is only a stratagem of history to promote the faster Westernisation of peoples who until recent times have remained on the periphery.

—What I am getting at, not too precisely perhaps, is that kind of ill-fated element (part maudite) *of the individual, when he relinquishes not his personality but his special characteristics. To the extent that he consents to that "solidarity regained", to that peace with nature, there is perhaps some sacrifice of his own singularity or particularity.*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: I disagree. The Culture/Nature opposition is essential for ethnologists, not because they invented it, as is sometimes objected, but because they observe it among the peoples that they study, as a true category of human understanding. I wouldn't want you to imagine me abandoning it so quickly.

Humanity does afford specific properties of its own as it comes to establish a cultural supremacy as opposed to a purely biological order. The proof—or one of the proofs—is that humanity alone has achieved the realisation of those unique and irreplaceable syntheses, which nature creates in the form of living species, in the form of individual persons.

Just now we were talking about the *œuvre* of Rembrandt and of Michelangelo: theirs are individual creations, yet they display the same order of complexity and originality as an animal or vegetable species taken in its totality. Consequently the "rights" which in Nature have to be formulated in terms of species are expressed in individual terms when dealing with Culture.

I would say that Poussin, Rembrandt, Rousseau or Kant are worth as much as an animal species or a plant species. But not more. And therefore the rights of man—the rights of every man—reach their limits at that exact point where their exercise involves or risks involving the extinction of a whole animal or plant species (not individually though, since I have no objections to us eating carrots, consuming grain, or killing animals to feed ourselves).

But what we cannot do, in the very name of the rights we claim for ourselves as human beings, is to endanger the existence of a species which, *sub specie naturae*, may be worth as much as a human being.

—Yes, I quite understand. But when you resort to the notion of "the individual" not in animal species but as human individuals, can't it finally be said that that irreducible value of the individual—whether it is Rembrandt, Rousseau, or some nameless passer-by—is a notion which is itself blemished, not perhaps because of latent ethnocentrism, but to the extent that other cultures, even though they themselves embraced this philosophy, have given no special status at all to this notion of the individual?

LÉVI-STRAUSS: A degree of ethnocentrism is inescapable. After all, what we can hope for—and we can hope for nothing more—is to succeed in working out a language that enables us to communicate, on the understanding that communication will always be partial. I believe that the formulation I am putting forward offers a means of communication, a more effective compromise among several types of civilisations or cultures, than our traditional principles.

IN A WAY, *that brings us back to Rousseau, and that passage at the beginning (Book I, Ch. 6) of* "Du Contrat Social" *where there is a kind of microcosm of the debate on the origin of inequality* ". . . et le genre humain périrait s'il ne changeait de manière d'être *(. . . and human kind would perish if it did not change its ways of being)." You think that we have now reached this crucial point?*

LÉVI-STRAUSS: I do not see any indication of a "changed way of being", and in any case I would like to add in defence of Rousseau that it is not at all certain that the *Contrat Social* puts forward a concrete plan of society that Rousseau might have advocated in real life. The *Contrat Social* seems to me a kind of theoretical grid against which to analyse and criticise any sort of real or possible society.

—All in all, though, you are, in a way, a reasoned optimist?

LÉVI-STRAUSS: I don't believe that I am an optimist. I would readily accept the reproach of pessimism, if to pessimism could be added the qualification of "serene"—*un pessimisme serein.*

But in the end I would say to the optimists, since optimists there are: your only chance lies in a modest, not a fevered, optimism. Everything I have tried to express elsewhere surveys the conditions under which mankind might perhaps attempt a new departure—without too much confidence in ever arriving.

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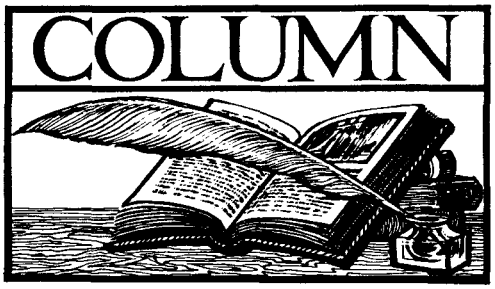

IN ONE SENSE at least, the General Election provided a surprise, though its result did not. Anyone who ignored the television version of the election campaign, or the predictions of the polls, and simply remembered the events of last winter, when during the worst weather for many years the public was subjected to continuous harassment by the trade unions, could not have had any doubt that the unions and their allies, the Labour Party, would be defeated. People have short memories, but not as short as all that. They do not easily forget, or forgive, remarks like Mr Sidney Weighell's, adjuring the railwaymen in the event of a wages free-for-all "to get their snouts in the trough." Such specimens of trade-union eloquence, betraying as much contempt for his own union members as for the general public, simply confirmed the electorate in a hostility to the unions which, in my opinion, proved decisive in the final result.

One could hardly have guessed this from the election campaign itself, in which both parties were careful not to emphasise the trade union issue.

In this, they underestimated most people's feeling that the power of the unions has increased, is increasing, and ought to be reduced and seen to be reduced. Prices, wages, taxation they insisted were what affected people most closely, not trade unionism. In this way, for fear of giving offence to potential supporters, they delicately skirted the fringes of an issue which, I think, in the end most powerfully influenced the result.

This helped to intensify the general air of unreality which surrounded the campaign and perhaps to explain one of its most striking features, which was its apparent failure to arouse any passionate interest or sense of personal involvement. The people watched the campaign on television as they might watch a prolonged football match, or comedy series, and with rather less sense of spectator participation. In the event, there was almost as much interest in whether the BBC or ITV had won the television battle as in who had actually won the election. What was surprising, after the apathy and indifference displayed during the campaign itself, was the numbers in which, on polling day, the electorate took the trouble to go out and vote.

I talked to a cameraman belonging to a television crew assigned to what he himself described as the intolerably boring task of tracking Mrs Thatcher day by day on her campaign tour. Not that it was Mrs Thatcher's fault; things were just as bad on the other side of the street. He explained how difficult it was for the camera to discover anything of interest in scenes to which the immediate audience appeared totally unresponsive. "On the same job", he said, "I have followed general elections in France and in Germany. In Paris, François Mitterand could fill the Palais des Sports which will hold ten thousand people. In Germany, when Walter Scheel addressed an open air meeting in drenching rain in a market town, the square was packed by a crowd which overflowed into all the neighbouring streets. Thatcher and Callaghan have difficulty in half-filling a small parish hall, which from the camera-eye point of view is strictly a non-event."

Is this another symptom of the "English disease", to which ENCOUNTER, together with so many foreign observers, has devoted considerable attention in recent years? It could be so; but it might also be that the apathy and indifference displayed by people in the course of the campaign itself were an inevitable result of the electoral process as it is conducted in Britain today. For by far the most powerful single influence exercised on that process is television, which profoundly affects the form, the style, and the content of an electoral campaign, to such an extent that general elections no longer perform the function which they once had, which was at recurrent intervals to bring the electors and their representatives into direct and immediate contact, so that each might see what kind of people they really were.

When I was a child my father often used to tell me how as a boy he watched Mr Gladstone addressing an unruly crowd from a brewer's dray in the East End of London. The memories of the Grand Old Man, passionate and patrician, and the turbulent mob, had left an ineffaceable impression on him, as an image of what politics really are or ought to be. But faced with daily and hourly exposure to the television camera could even Mr Gladstone have maintained his magical power to charm, to dominate and to persuade; and in such circumstances would there have been any turbulent mob to listen to him? Perhaps I should have said to my friend the cameraman that if, during an election campaign, it was difficult to find material for an interesting programme, he and his camera were at least partly to blame.

★

TELEVISION PRODUCERS might protest, in their own defence, that they command by far the

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most effective medium ever invented for enabling statesmen and politicians to present themselves to a mass audience. It goes out into the streets and on to the hustings, and brings us back the reality of the political battle without our having to move from our fireside. Moreover, it does this on a scale which was never previously imaginable, and today is essential in a mass democracy exercising universal suffrage. Political techniques adapted to a privileged few enjoying a limited franchise no longer serve their purpose when politicians and parties must appeal to all and everybody, and television gives them the means of doing so.

But it is not really so. It is not with the direct reality of politics, or indeed of anything else, that television presents us. It necessarily, and literally, projects a screen between us and reality, and what it shows us has already been pre-digested, selected, cut, modified and manipulated to serve the purposes of a medium designed to attract the largest possible number of people, that is, to the lowest common denominator of their intelligence. Politicians and parties appeal for votes, television for ratings, and the two purposes conflict. Television projects, not a reality, but an illusion of reality, and thereby the real life of politics is obscured and drained away.

Television may claim that, in its presentation of public affairs, it employs different methods and techniques, and pursues different aims, from when it is merely seeking to entertain. And moreover that it presents us with a far wider spectrum of events than anything we could ever attain by any other means. Yet its fundamental purpose remains the same, which is to hold us, immobile and passive, in front of the box.

IT MAY PERHAPS be inferred from what I have just written that I look on television with a somewhat jaundiced eye, and thereby disqualify myself from any serious discussion of the subject. In the hope, however, of removing or modifying my prejudices, and enlarging my view, I have been reading a short but fascinating book about American television by Mr Ben Stein called *The View from Sunset Boulevard*.[1]

I feel sure that Mr Stein's view can be accepted all the more readily because he himself regards those responsible for producing television programmes with admiration, affection, and respect, and is quite sincere in his freely confessed ambition to become one of them himself. As he says:

> "I would consider this book wasted if it were not read with the same love for the people of Hollywood that I have felt since I got here. Among the people I talked to for this book are the finest people alive.

When Mr Stein uses the phrase, "the people of Hollywood", he writes advisedly and deliberately, because, he says, the heart and vital centre of the television industry are the small community of producers and writers who are directly responsible for creating its twenty or so most successful programmes, some of which can expect to be watched, on any one night, by up to seventy million people. The members of the community do not number more than about two hundred people, on whom the television industry depends for its most successful products. With few exceptions, they all live in Los Angeles; they earn upwards of $250,000 a year, and the annual income of some of them runs into millions of dollars.

Mr Stein, who has been a teacher, a government servant, a journalist and novelist, now wishes to join this highly privileged group which he admires so much. He has had the interesting idea that it might help him in his new career if he were to investigate the community of "the people of Hollywood", in order to try and discover how far their own views and attitudes are reflected in the television industry's most successful enterprises. His enquiry took the form of interviewing a large and representative number of the industry's most successful producers and writers, with results which are in some cases startling, and nearly always disconcerting.

The range of products which "the people of Hollywood" are responsible for creating is a narrow one, and can be divided into two characteristic and classical forms. The first is the adventure-thriller, of which some, like *Kojak*, *Hawaii 5-0*, *Colombo*, *Charlie's Angels* and others, are familiar to British television audiences; the second is the domestic situation comedy series, or "Sit-Com", like *M.A.S.H.*, *Laverne and Shirley*, *All in the Family*, or *Happy Days*. The common quality of this second type of programme is that it presents what Mr Stein calls the "lovable high jinks" of a group, lower or lower-middle class, black and white, and also lovable, with which audiences of millions find it easy to identify. On the whole, we in Britain prefer to produce our own indigenous version of this kind of rubbish for ourselves.

Mr Stein finds that both these types of phenomenally successful programme present certain rigidly stereotyped images of America, to such an extent that they are an essential element in any smash-hit. One of the most rigid of these stereotypes is the image presented of the Rich, and of Big Business in general. Big Business in American television is invariably corrupt, vicious and greedy, and lives by exploiting the poor. It has

[1] *The View from Sunset Boulevard*. By BEN STEIN. Basic Books, $8.95.

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close and extensive connections with the underworld, and is largely dominated by the Mafia, which invests its huge ill-gotten gains in the most prestigious blue-chip enterprises. When, as so often in the adventure-thriller, like *Colombo*, the seedy but honest cop is called upon to investigate some particularly horrid murder, it is almost invariably discovered to have been committed by some prodigiously rich and successful businessman concealing his evil designs, financial or sexual, beneath a cloak of impeccable respectability. Big Business in television is Bad Business and the Rich, its beneficiaries, are necessarily evil.

Just as business and riches are Bad, so the poor and poverty are Good. The antithesis of the wicked rich are the poor but honest, in adventure-thrillers frequently unjustly accused of crimes they have never committed, in "sit-coms" displaying the virtues of warm hearts, generosity and neighbourliness, and an unaffected gusto and spontaneity in the simple pleasures of life, as opposed to the sophisticated depravity of the rich. When, in *The Streets of San Francisco*, a beautiful co-ed is found brutally murdered on the campus, the obvious suspects are a Chicano on parole for a violent crime and a student junkie who is having an affair with the wife of a medical professor, but in fact the killer is the victim's rich Lesbian roommate, who has murdered her out of jealousy.

The virtues of the poor are displayed especially by the young and ethnic minorities.

> "In the thousands of hours I have spent watching adventure shows [says Mr Stein] I have never seen a major crime committed by a poor, teenage, Mexican or Puerto Rican youth, even though they account for a high percentage of violent crime."

A similar antithesis to Rich and Poor is to be found in the view from Los Angeles of Big City and Small Town. Despite its outward manifestations of violence, Big City is the home of virtue because it is the home of the poor, and its festering slums and ghettos preserve the warm-hearted humanity characteristic of the poor. The Rich do not live in Big City but hide their depravity in the seclusion of their country houses and out-of-town estate developments. Big City is generous, outgoing, with an intense zest for life and a metropolitan disdain for whatever is parochial and provincial. Crime does indeed flourish there, but the poor cannot be blamed for this, because in their case, unlike the rich, crime is the product of social conditions.

By contrast, Small Town, wherever it is situated, is the apotheosis of parochial vices. It is hypocritical, mean and narrow-minded, capable of every kind of petty trickery, deceit and sexual perversion; behind a façade of puritanism, respectability, and pretty timber-frame houses and churches, it is a festering hotbed of vice and corruption. The innocent from Big City needs to have all his wits about him when he enters Small Town. When Kojak, the big, smart, wiseacre New York detective, is sent to investigate a crime in Small Town he finds himself thwarted and hampered at every turn by the corrupt local police force, and in the end is lucky to get away with his life before the crime is solved. Small Town is Snopestown.

MR STEIN PURSUES his enquiry into many other aspects of the View from Sunset Boulevard, though in none does he find such dramatically clear-cut contrasts as between Rich and Poor, Big City and Small Town. But in all he finds attitudes at work which run contrary to generally accepted views of American life, and even more to the image of America propagated by traditional folk-culture, and with none of its roots in history or present-day reality. Indeed, he concludes that for traditional folk-attitudes "the people of Hollywood" are rapidly substituting a new folk-culture of their own devising. What is surprising, and perhaps dismaying, is that this should be the work almost entirely of the tiny TV community of Los Angeles. But what is more surprising, even startling, is that (as Mr Stein's interviews show) this new popular culture accurately reflects the ideas and attitudes of those who are in process of creating it. It would be easy to think that the totally false picture of American life which they project on the screen is merely a cynical attempt to exploit the feelings of their nation-wide audience. The contrary, rather, seems to be true. "The people of Hollywood" genuinely and sincerely, crudely and naively, believe in the illusion which they have created for themselves and, through the TV screen, project on hundreds of millions of others.

I am not sure what lessons, if any, one should draw from this. Mr Stein himself suggests that his interviews in Hollywood provide a number of problems and paradoxes. Perhaps his final words are worth considering:

> "It is not that it is good or bad that the views of the TV community get the prominent display they do. I have certain opinions which are undoubtedly revealed in this book, but I have no overall feeling that something terrible is happening. In a free society, different groups will obtain power over different institutions at different times. Certainly the government should do nothing about it. But then again, no one should be stopped from pointing out what has happened in Hollywood."

One can only thank Mr Stein for pointing out what has happened so clearly, moderately and effectively. But I am not at all sure that I remain as optimistic as he does.

R

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Peter Porter

At Lake Massaciuccoli

Ecco il lago Massaciuccoli
tanto ricco di cacciagione
quanto misero d'ispirazione . . .
D'ANNUNZIO

A huge bombardment on the lake's long plain
As green worlds collide and skim above
The oily surface—visible to us only
As a dust of spume and green confetti
Where small frogs jackknife on to lily-pads—
Tall rushes begin beyond the rotting jetty
And over their grave heads an oriental bridge
Leads nowhere. Toffee-coloured heat
Holds the outdoor café and the pampered villas,
A stain of rice-fields in the middle distance—
Indiscreet lemons lean across the road
To naturalise the noonday tide of cars:
Italy still fights its history
With engines. Where, though, I ask myself
Are the descendants of those ducks Puccini shot
With all the skill of a Ferrari engineer,
Where the ghost of that armed man wading
"To terrorise the palmipeds of his adoration"?
Boom. Boom. Fall of the executioner's axe,
The cancer surgeon's scalpel, the gong
Which announces that death's challenge
Has been taken up. Eighty cigarettes a day—
Pilgrims waiting at the gates observe
The lung-coloured lake. *L'homme armé*
Goes too far back, and yet walled Lucca
Has a league of high composers no less
Pungent than Castruccio. Putting on his waders,
He might think of art, of facing the public
Armed with the visible part of dreams. Disappointment,
For all his calculation to a quaver's whisper,
Leaves him no resort but slaughtering ducks.
No one produces the art he wants to,
Everything that he makes is code,
To be read for its immaculate intention.
Then in death he finds the final disappointment,
That no clarity comes anywhere, the perfect
Vision has gone into the mist, as when dawn
Wakens the wet-winged skimmers on the lake
And every hazy lineament lures the hunter
Into a picture-postcard world. *O mors inevitabilis*,
Not to be held back by more than function,
A pot of Stephens' Blue Black Ink, a gale
All night among the pines and yet no air
Upon our planet—nothing so well observed
As pain, apotheosis of things out of place.

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To return then after some small adultery
To the mystery of fiction; to write letters
To the world's four corners while mosquitos
Shake like stage scrim across the door:
There must be a vision, perhaps of cruelty
In Venetian Peking (better at least
Than the sort of thing D'Annunzio would offer)—
It hardly matters, since the big tunes
Wait in the desk for him to pick them up
And a wife can keep one's view of sorrow fresh.
He should think himself most fortunate
Never having needed to be autobiographical.
At the lake's side, I too, maker of this
Near dramatic monologue, honour him truly
Yet could not bear an enlargement of
The world these frogs and teeming spawn inhabit.
He was not so soft; what he saw
Was this lake made into the world—not to be
Changed or pitied but crying through the night
Abandoning life for love. The dark will come
To every average denizen the same,
Sounds upon the shore staying for waftage.

Carol Rumens

Suburban

Smoke hour. Brown
death of the blue hydrangea.
Gardens of spilled rust.
So the season smudges over

the measured clarities
of these hill-cut avenues.
Only the houses seem
certain of who they are,

solid as bottles of milk.
No season alters them.
They exist, they are proof.
Their owners cherish them

and are in turn defined
by white stucco, black
stripes of thirties Tudor,
the cat, the snowy drapes . . .

or are they? Once
I'd have been sure, accusing.
Now I think of eyes
that wait, of faint hands stirring

in windows not yet lit,
and words, less brave than money,
lying spilled or incomplete.
No hard-earned roof stands nearer

now, than the rims of stars
pulsing through time and dark.
The cycling schoolgirls laugh
past their parents' fences.

Love flickers to itself
like an unwatched television
—but the neighbours will say nothing.
The priest will bless it and bury it.

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Literature & Criticism

A Neglected Responsibility

Contemporary Literary MSS.—By PHILIP LARKIN

I AM DELIGHTED that this seminar has been arranged, because its subject is a complex and important one that has not, as far as I know, been discussed on this scale before. I am not so delighted at being asked to make the first contribution, because, in contrast with the rest of our speakers, I really know very little about modern literary manuscripts in this particular context. In fact not many people do, unless they are regularly engaged in buying or selling them. These operations most often take place privately and personally, for undisclosed prices; even public auctions are usually conducted through discreet agents, so that, unless one is extremely interested, who paid how much for what is hard to discover. In consequence, one never really knows the going price for any given manuscript: there is no manuscript equivalent of *Book-Auction Records*. Nor is it much easier to find out which libraries have what manuscripts. There is no parallel in this country to the Library of Congress's *National Union Catalogue of Manuscripts*, which in America provides a starting-point for those seeking this kind of information, and even the British Library's *Catalogue of Additions to Manuscripts* is several decades behindhand. It follows that for the average librarian the whole question of literary manuscripts and their acquisition is rather a mystery. I hope that this seminar will go some way towards changing this, and that we shall leave it better equipped to take on what up till now has been a neglected responsibility. I hope too that the group will find it possible to collate and publish the information supplied in response to Jenny Stratford's questionnaire. I know that this is a project she has long had at heart, and it is good to see it a stage nearer realisation.

We should remember that when we talk of manuscripts we are likely to mean several different things. Primarily, of course, we mean texts produced by the author before a work reaches publication, in a form that shows its genesis and evolution. These may be manuscripts, but they may be typescripts: they may even be corrected proofs. But equally we can mean diaries, notebooks, letters to and from, even photographs and recorded tapes: anything, in fact, that makes up the archive of a creative writer's life and constitutes the background of his works. Even fair copies done for charity or presentation may contain variant readings. So I think we should begin by agreeing that by modern literary manuscripts we don't only mean the work-sheets of a poem; we could mean the revised proofs of a novel, or even the engagement diary of a playwright. I make this point because manuscripts in this broad definition tend to fall into two categories: those that might be acquired, and increasingly are being acquired, during a writer's lifetime, and those that we can expect to become available only after his death. It is the first kind that we stand the best chance of getting, and that we should try to get, for we are less likely to have the chance to acquire the second when the time comes.

I hope we can agree, too, that modern literary manuscripts are not intrinsically different from any other kind of literary manuscript, and that we should collect them for the same reasons. All literary manuscripts have two kinds of value: what

PHILIP LARKIN, *as well as being in the opinion of many the best living poet in England, is Librarian of the Brynmor Jones Library in the University of Hull. On 21–22 March 1979 the Manuscripts Group of the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries held a two-day seminar in King's College, London, on modern literary manuscripts, and Dr Larkin was asked to introduce the subject; his talk is reproduced here. Other speakers included Dr Daniel Waley (Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Library Reference Division), Mr Anthony Rota of Bertram Rota Ltd., and Dr David Farmer (Head of Special Collections in the McFarlin Library of the University of Tulsa).*

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might be called the magical value and the meaningful value. The magical value is the older and more universal: this is the paper he wrote on, these are the words as he wrote them, emerging for the first time in this particular miraculous combination. We may feel inclined to be patronising about this Shelley-plain, Thomas-coloured factor, but it is a potent element in all collecting, and I doubt if any librarian can be a successful manuscript collector unless he responds to it to some extent. The meaningful value is of much more recent origin, and is the degree to which a manuscript helps to enlarge our knowledge and understanding of a writer's life and work. A manuscript can show the cancellations, the substitutions, the shifting towards the ultimate form and the final meaning. A notebook, simply by being a fixed sequence of pages, can supply evidence of chronology. Unpublished work, unfinished work, even notes towards unwritten work all contribute towards our knowledge of a writer's intentions; his letters and diaries add to what we know of his life and the circumstances in which he wrote. This kind of value has been greatly enhanced by the rise of English studies in our universities during this century, and we probably think of modern literary manuscripts in these terms; all the same, not every manuscript has meaningful value, whereas it is bound to have magical value, if it is worth keeping at all.

Those last half-dozen words bring up what is probably the biggest reservation the average librarian has about modern literary manuscripts. A manuscript, by and large, is as good as its author, but whereas we know whether a 19th-century writer is good, we don't know whether a modern writer may not be totally forgotten in ten years' time, or at least whether he will be of sufficient interest to make it important that we should be able to know how his works were written. This of course is an extremely complex question, and raises the whole subject of literary evaluation, but I don't see it as a reason for not collecting manuscripts, any more than not knowing which horse is going to win is a reason for not placing a bet. In any case, we do know which writers are thought to be good, or if we don't our English departments will tell us; if we go beyond accepted reputations, then we do so on the theory that one win will compensate for ninety-nine misses, even in crude terms of cash. This seems to me a quite adequate basis on which to proceed. It is, after all, a poor author who is not worth a thesis at some time or other.

AT THIS POINT I think I should say that if our proceedings are to be realistic we must talk not only about modern literary manuscripts but about the modern literary manuscript situation, and this situation as I think we all know is that during the last forty or fifty years, and more particularly during the last twenty years, the papers of the major British writers of this century have been intensively collected not by British but by American libraries. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in so far as future studies of these writers, and definitive editions of their works, depend on direct access to their papers, these studies and these editions are most likely to be undertaken by American scholars in American universities. There are of course exceptions, but in the main the popular view of modern literary manuscripts is that they are all in America, and when one considers the great American university collections one can only agree. A meeting of British national and university librarians to discuss modern literary manuscripts resembles an annual convention of stable-door lockers. However we try to talk objectively, our discussions are bound in the end to come back to what went wrong in the past, and what we can do in the future.

There are of course those who think that nothing much has gone wrong: Britain and America make up one English-speaking community with a common ancestry, and we should be glad that American libraries have taken up the cause of preserving our common heritage so assiduously. You may remember that last year Mr Geoffrey Gorer wrote to *The Times* protesting against the use of the word "saved" when what was meant was "retained in England." "It is inaccurate as well as discourteous to suggest that these papers and paintings would have been in any peril if they went to their American purchasers; they would probably have been better looked after and would certainly have been as available to interested scholars." And the late E. M. Forster once wrote to me:

> "I fear the transatlantic migration can't be checked. The Americans can't collect medieval manuscripts, for the reason that we and other European countries have got hold of them already. They are therefore collecting the 1850–1950 period instead, and I feel that our librarians and other scholars would do well to keep in friendly touch with them, and promote the exchange of microfilms."

Well, as they say, it's a point of view. I certainly don't mean to imply that American libraries are not responsible custodians of manuscripts, or that they are not better off in them than in private hands. Opinions may differ on their accessibility: for British scholars, of course, they are many thousand miles away, and I am not sure how far "the exchange of microfilms" proves a satisfactory solution in all cases. On the whole I remain convinced that the best place for a writer's papers is in one of the libraries of his own country. I think they are more likely to be studied there, and studied with greater understanding; I think they are more likely to grow there by the addition of further related

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collections from his family and friends; I think above all that a country's writers are one of its most precious assets, and that if British librarians resign the collection and care of their manuscripts to the librarians of other countries they are letting one of their most rewarding responsibilities slide irretrievably away.

WHY HAVE BRITISH LIBRARIES allowed themselves to be so comprehensively scooped in this field? Because this is what happened: we have not been beaten in a fair fight, we have not fought at all. In 1960 I wrote to twenty leading British writers to ask what their experience in this field had been, and received a number of revealing comments.

> "The whole point is that England is not really interested in the manuscripts of anyone not securely dead."
>
> "If almost any English university had asked me five years ago to give them my manuscript collection, which happened to be unusually complete, I should certainly have said yes."

A third said that he had never known British libraries take the slightest interest in such collecting. What was the reason for this difference of attitudes? Obviously, at least in part, it relates to the attitudes of our respective universities towards modern writers.

English studies in this country were slow to come to terms with the 20th century. When I was an undergraduate in the early years of the War, the most recent author I was examined on was Wordsworth; my friends, coming back after 1945, were allowed to advance as far as Tennyson. In the 1950s I worked as a librarian in a university where the head of the English department would not sanction the purchase for the library of texts by living writers (he was eventually compelled to compromise in the case of Bernard Shaw). Although this attitude has largely altered, I suspect that even today a research student is discouraged from working on a living writer. American universities are very different: they see living writers as fit subjects for study, and their papers as raw material for research. C. P. Snow told me in 1960 that there were 31 theses about him in America and none in England, and I doubt if his was an isolated case. I am sure that all this helped to bring about what I have called the present manuscript situation. On the whole, as I am fond of saying, libraries are feminine: they respond, they do not initiate. The lack of interest shown in modern literary manuscripts by British libraries reflects an identical lack of interest by British universities.

This analysis may seem to ignore a much more potent and obvious factor: if I may paraphrase the famous Fitzgerald/Hemingway exchange, American librarians are different from us, they have more money. Well, of course, this is true; at the same time, it is galling to recall that the first successful concerted effort to secure modern English manuscripts was based on solicitation. This was the campaign mounted in the late 1930s by the Librarian of the Lockwood Memorial Library in the University of Buffalo, Charles Abbott. Abbott saw the importance of worksheets in the full study of a poem, and started sending letters to poets asking for them. The sheer novelty of the request was so successful that in January 1938 he came over on the *Aquitania* to conduct the operation personally. He stayed for three months, visiting poets or being visited by them. The names he mentions are a strange comment on the mutability of literary reputations: Herbert Read, Hilaire Belloc, James Stephens, Ruth Pitter, Sylvia Townsend Warner, W. J. Turner, Richard Church, Humbert Wolfe, Walter de la Mare, Lord Alfred Douglas, Andrew Young, Alfred Noyes, Martin Armstrong, Gordon Macleod, Bryan Guinness and many others, although there is no mention of Auden, MacNeice, Betjeman or Dylan Thomas. Stephen Spender gave him a big ledger containing the drafts of nearly all the poems in his first collection. Abbott left England reflecting that "if there had been any doubts about the superiority of the interview method over the begging-letter approach, they were long since dispelled."

IT WAS RECEIVING this kind of solicitation myself—at first from Mr Abbott, then from others—that awoke my interest in what was going on. It seemed dreadful to me that manuscript material was leaving the country just because American librarians could take the trouble to ask for it, and I wrote several letters to the papers grumbling. Then I held my mini-survey, and put the results in a memorandum to SCONUL's Sub-Committee on Manuscripts in March 1961. Their response was that although they rejected the idea of collective action, and did not favour the earmarking of grants for this particular purpose, and didn't think staff should have special responsibility for it, they thought that national and university libraries could make it better known to living British authors that they were interested in acquiring their manuscripts. No doubt this was not as feeble as it seemed at the time.

But as one door shut, another opened: Eric Walter White, then Assistant Secretary of the Arts Council, had read my letters and had also seen the Lockwood Memorial Library at Buffalo, and he was interested in setting up a similar collection in Britain, possibly as an adjunct to the Arts Council Poetry Library. The negotiations that he set in train resulted in the foundation of the National Manuscript Collection of Contemporary Writers.

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An Arts Council Committee, armed with a tiny grant from the Pilgrim Trust, set about buying manuscripts and reselling them to the British Museum to form a collection with this title. This in itself marked a notable change in Museum policy, as up till then it had not reckoned to accept papers of living authors, even as gifts. Truly, as John Lehmann once wrote, "English libraries were sleeping till Texas woke them", a scene I should dearly like to see depicted by William Blake, or possibly Max Beerbohm.

Given its small resources, the Committee was surprisingly successful. In 1967 it held an exhibition in the British Museum, showing notebooks by Auden, Andrew Young, Peter Porter, David Gascoyne and myself, with worksheets by Vernon Watkins, Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, Edmund Blunden, Keith Douglas, Stevie Smith and David Wright. Jenny Stratford compiled a hardback catalogue called *Poetry in the Making*, which is by now a collector's piece. After 1967 the scheme broadened: at first, on the Lockwood pattern, the Committee had collected poetry worksheets only; now all kinds of literary manuscripts were purchased, and sold to any SCONUL library at a discount of 25%. In 1974 another exhibition was held, this time with a complete catalogue of the collection up to 1972, again compiled to the highest professional standard by Jenny Stratford. After that, the discount was increased to 50%, parallel to the subsidy given by the Victoria and Albert Museum, but most regrettably the British Museum, or British Library as it had by then become, was ruled by the Department of Education and Science as ineligible to receive it. This seemed to me then a piece of vicious bureaucracy, and still does.

I HAVE DWELT A LITTLE on the work of the Arts Council Committee for a number of reasons. In the first place, even after nearly twenty years I doubt if it and its work is as well known as it should be. Secondly, what little I know about acquiring manuscripts I owe to being one of its members and latterly its chairman. Thirdly, although of course I don't pretend it has materially altered the overall manuscript situation, it showed what could be done even in the '60s and '70s with extremely small resources, if only the will to act were there. And, lastly, in its short life it has demonstrated two different ways of going about the business of finding and conserving on a national basis the kind of material we are discussing. The first was an enthusiastic individual, Eric White, working in conjunction with a single national library, the British Museum. The second was by resigning the initiative of finding manuscripts to the member libraries of SCONUL, and then subsidising their purchases by up to 50%. My expectation was that the second method would be far more productive than the first. In fact it was not. No more purchases, if as many, were made under the second scheme than under the first, and the Committee's grant was reduced in consequence. This was a great disappointment. If half SCONUL's libraries had bought one manuscript a year, the scheme would have boomed.

Why didn't they? Well, it has to be admitted that even for a library prepared to interest itself in literary manuscripts, their collection is not easy. Even if we begin as Charles Abbott began, and write fifty letters to fifty living writers—for instance, fifteen poets, fifteen novelists, fifteen playwrights and five miscellaneous—we can no longer expect the success rate of 1938. Writers are aware that their papers are in demand, and any response we get is likely to be cautious. Time and patience are needed to make contact, to go and see them, to entertain them at the library to show them what has already been acquired, to convince them that we have a knowledge of their work and a real desire to preserve the records of its making. This calls for staff with a knowledge of modern literature, and a genuine liking for it. What is more, our interest must, in this day and age, be supported by funds, and I know from personal experience that for the average university library in these days this is far from easy. Charles Abbott rationalised his begging technique by saying that he had to spend what money he had on first editions (which couldn't be got for nothing), and that it was all right, as writers would only have thrown their manuscripts away if he hadn't asked for them. This would not work today. Writers do not expect British libraries to pay American prices, but they expect something, and we shall not get very far if we seem to be trying to drive an unfairly hard bargain. I wonder how much it is reasonable to expect the average university library to spend on manuscripts in a year. One per cent of its grant? Half one per cent? As much as we spend on journals that are never looked at and could be borrowed from the British Library Lending Division at Boston Spa anyway? I wonder.

On the other hand, British librarians enjoy one enormous advantage over their American colleagues: we are here. We don't have to take the *Aquitania* to establish contact with British writers: increasingly, they are in and out of our universities, giving talks, giving readings, on one-year appointments: contact can be made, meetings arranged, even—in extreme cases—honorary degrees offered. Secondly, although writers differ very much in their reactions, I honestly believe that most of them would prefer their manuscripts to stay in this country, where they can see them from time to time if they want, than have them disappear for ever across the Atlantic. Recognition in one's own country can mean a great deal. In many cases it might lead a writer to sell his papers to a British

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library for less money than he would have got from America, simply because of this added element of local recognition. Several writers I wrote to in 1960 said this.

I am not envisaging a situation in which Britain's hundred best writers each have fifty honorary degrees and spend their weekdays being driven from university to university in hired Daimlers for champagne lunches. But I do think that university libraries might initiate discussions with their departments of English on the collection of literary manuscripts in general, and, given a favourable response, on which writers it would be sensible to approach. Three classes come to mind immediately: writers born in that area, writers who studied or worked at the university in question, and writers in whom the department is particularly interested, either through research interests or by chance association such as personal friendship. It may be that no response will be forthcoming, but at least I think the attempt should be made, and this kind of approach will minimise the possibility of overlap.

AS I SAID EARLIER, we should do all we can to collect the papers of living writers, because increasingly we are at a great disadvantage when it comes to acquiring the archives of the recently dead. Once a collection of this kind comes into the saleroom on an international market, I recognise that British libraries simply have not the resources necessary to compete for them. Very occasionally a collection can be located and secured that has not come up for sale: one hears encouraging reports about the University of Sussex and Virginia Woolf, but such negotiation needs a good deal of luck, tact and persistence—perhaps I should say, even, thickness of skin. It is said that the world at large did not believe that Thomas Hardy was dying until it heard that Sir Sidney Cockerell of the Fitzwilliam Museum had arrived at Max Gate. But in general what we do not acquire during a writer's lifetime, we are not likely to acquire after his death. His papers make one melancholy appearance in the pages of Sotheby's catalogue, then yield to that irresistible gravitational westward pull, to end up deep in the heart of one of these institutions for which Mr Gorer has so much respect, as indeed we all have.

Is there a lesson to be learned in this connection from the recent acquisition of the papers of Walter de la Mare by the Bodleian Library, with the assistance of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Arts Council? The sum involved here was substantial, but it was met by a pooling of resources by bodies that individually could not have met the

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price asked. If this can happen once, it can surely happen again: the drawback as things stand at present is the time it takes to mobilise the combined support in question. If a consortium of these sources could be organised, and machinery devised for quick consultation when a substantial collection comes on the market, then more successes might be achieved. Otherwise, one can only hope that the proposed National Heritage Fund may be persuaded to take notice of literary archives, if and when it comes into operation.

MR CHAIRMAN, the fact that you have asked me to say the first word on this question means, happily, that you do not expect me to say the last. I am well aware that there are many aspects of the subject I have not mentioned. How far, for instance, has the harvest of 20th-century literary manuscripts now been gathered in, leaving nothing but the meagre gleanings of the present and future? How far, in short, is there anything left to collect? How far has the world recession halted the transatlantic migration? Will Mrs Stratford's questionnaire and its answers reveal that, despite popular belief, there are substantial modern manuscript holdings in this country after all? These are questions on which I hope succeeding speakers will throw some light.

But let me in closing make one final comment. I have said that I hope our proceedings will be realistic, but I wonder how far I have been realistic in speaking as if we are all agreed that the collection of modern literary manuscripts is a serious and rewarding responsibility. This is what I hope we believe. But when I look at SCONUL's track record over the last decade as I have experienced it, I am forced to the conclusion that the libraries that really do believe it are in a minority. Perhaps it is a pity that we have not included in our programme of speakers a librarian who would say that he has no intention of throwing away money on the wastepaper of nonentities to pander to a passing fad, because despite signs of a change of heart in recent years this is what the majority of British librarians have thought in the past, and is what I strongly suspect the majority of them think today. Perhaps one is here today; if so, I hope he will put his point of view in discussion, and the sooner the better. It will help the rest of us to realise the magnitude of our responsibility.

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Too High-Flown a Genius?

William Empson's Poetry Prose—By ROY FULLER

ON THE PUBLICATION of the New Year's Honours List I dare say many strangers or near strangers felt an urge to congratulate Sir William, cheered at justice done by that far from consistently just ritual. I also guess some congratulatory letters were aborted or stillborn, Empson's critical eye being feared at the last, to say nothing of his nose for social propriety. An even greater unconfidence must possess anyone writing at perceptible length about Empson's work. I have now been reading him for fifty years (buying *Cambridge Poetry 1929* when it came out) but I find that confers no special qualification.

The reason for trying to say what one thinks about the work is conveniently provided by two recent books, one on the verse, one about the criticism. *The God Approached*[1] (the title rather bears out my preliminary remarks and comes from the opening line of Empson's "Doctrinal Point") is a poem-by-poem commentary on the contents of the *Collected Poems*. What a boon this is. Though I have not tested it on every poem, so far I have not found the authors (from the Memorial University of Newfoundland) to miss a blow, either by way of information or interpretation. Even their bafflement—though rare—seems to shed light. Their explication is comparatively succinct, not at all of that free association kind (often wide of the mark) particularly characteristic of transatlantic academics. Of course, a few critics have set out to untangle Empsonian poetic knots, but nothing so comprehensive and exhaustive has previously appeared. Plainly the volume is indispensable for the admirer or student of Empson's verse: indeed, a good deal of innocent fun can be had by all, trying an interpretation, then looking up (not too quickly) the Gardners' answer.

One speculates whether this book may not in fact change the value the poems have been conceived to possess. I mean that from its first appearance the bulk of the poetry has raised the nasty question: is it worth the reader's trouble? Roger Sale well described one aspect of the business in the *TLS* for 1 December 1978:

[1] *The God Approached: A Commentary on the poems of William Empson.* By PHILIP and AVERIL GARDNER. Chatto & Windus. £7.50.

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I, as I suspect is the case with many, have a dozen or so Empson poems I know and love precisely because I have initially been sufficiently struck by something about them to make me take the time and employ the patience required to tease them into shape. But there are others which in effect I have always passed over because I could not make them out and because their surface beauties were not enticing.

In the case of someone like myself, a number of lines or passages have been embedded in the memory—in a sense put beyond judgment—through being met so frequently over so many years in anthologies and critical articles, the rest of the work in varying degrees remaining uncomprehended. But *The God Approached*, used conscientiously, opens up the whole of the verse for evaluation; puts the issue whether, after all, poems written off as impossibly crabbed and the like might, better understood, be admitted to the canon of work (smallish, in my view, as will appear) by which Empson's stature is to be measured. Some time must go by before any such change can occur but my feeling is that, taking one thing with another, the effect of a broader understanding of Empson's verse, though desirable, is unlikely much to affect his place as a poet. A marginal increase in the number of horses in the stable capable of "showing" on the course will not, in my judgment, raise the stable's standing.

TWO SPECIAL EXCELLENCES of Empson's verse have often been singled out: the singing line and the ingenious trope. The singing line has been named and approvingly referred to by the poet himself (see, for instance, his interview with Christopher Ricks in the special Empson number of *the Review*, June 1963). What is mainly in mind is the full, end-stopped iambic pentameter, one of the two things (the other was a tone) that John Wain and other poets of the '50s took from Empson; e.g. "Poise of my hands reminded me of yours." The ingenious trope appealed right away, for at the end of the '20s the revived enthusiasm for Donne had scarcely abated, so that a piece beginning "Law makes long spokes of the short stakes of men" was relished by a provincial poetaster, particularly since being a solicitor's articled clerk he well understood the image's mechanics. In this aspect of Empson's verse there was the further advantage for me, and I would guess for a good few others, that science appeared too; also Donnelike. Professors Philip and Averil Gardner, in their usefully informative introduction, identify the science strand with three semi-popular books of the late '20s, Jeans's *The Universe Around Us*, Eddington's *The Nature of the Physical World*, and J. B. S. Haldane's *Possible Worlds*; but of course the fact that such books were popular (notably *The Nature of the Physical World*, by no means plain sailing) revealed the existence of a public ready for the new science (especially Empson's chief concern, the discoveries in astronomy) to take its place in general culture, including poetry.

This is perhaps the most convenient place to mention Empson's connection (or lack of it, as it seems strangely to turn out) with an older poet who also to some degree brings science in and is a master of the grand line—Edgell Rickword.

That sad sea-lumber, barnacled delight,
frets but retards not, founders in, the tide
rattling the relics of our royal state,
lorn Lackland's treasure, drowned Mnemosyne,
mashed in scurf and grit to dumb fish-fodder.

Such lines by Rickword (and earlier examples might be quoted) one would have wagered had been seen by the juvenile Empson (note also the omission of the light beat at the start of line five, an Empsonian trait), but he has said (in the Rickword supplement to *PN Review*, Volume 6, Number 1) that he probably did not read Rickword until 1931. It is no use fretting over poetic injustice (and Empson himself was not a poetic best-seller, as the Gardners' Introduction reveals), but what a pity Rickword's poetry has not been as fashionable as Empson's, the more so as it is commonly intelligible as well as musical and metaphysical.

I WOULD NOT, at this late stage, attempt a wholesale devaluation of the Empsonian line or trope, but it does seem to me that some of the objections to Empson's poetry stem from those very things. In the case of singing lines, the poet, in the interview mentioned, refers approvingly to what I take to be on the frontier, if not actually over the border, of self-parody—the poem "The Teasers." In "Not but they die, the teasers and the dreams" (to go no further than the opening line) the typical ingredients add up to something that makes me uneasy as well as puzzled—the opening phrase seems intended to be colloquial, but it is surely obsolescent (perhaps the poet had the Yorkshire dialect "nobbut" in mind, though that usage really means "nothing but"); the first (curious) noun employed in some difficult way, the second rather pretentious after what has gone before. Perhaps this is nit-picking, and I must at once add other examples of detached lines whose unsatisfactoriness may be found more obvious. They raise questions because of their funny (peculiar) English or ellipses; their not measuring up to some larger notion the poet seems to have in mind.

Then I said The Garden? Laughing she said No.
And I a twister love what I abhor.
It is too weak to speak of right and crime.
Not busting now before the fish away.

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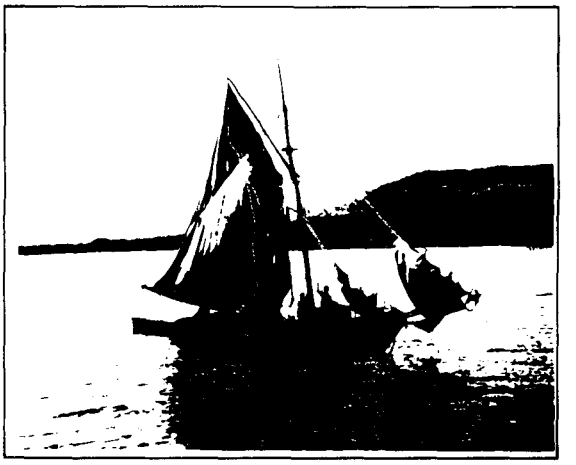

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The lovely grass is brown is dry is grey.
Of course I had to pass him to a dickey job.

The rot becomes more definable with time: though Empson's poetry was written during a comparatively short time span, there is a fairly rapid ageing process, if not in the "marvellous Boy" to Daddy Wordsworth category. In the later verse even an admired line may look vulnerable. "It seemed the best thing to be up and go"—in this famous refrain there is a streak of the *faux naif* and a phrase that merely purports to be idiomatic, while the repetition intensifies the disagreeable hint of a Hemingwayesque dumb-ox toughness in both the sentiment and the expression of it. Incidentally, Empson's slangy turns are occasionally so dubious as to make one wonder whether his long spells abroad may not have affected his diction (not hearing enough or enough kinds of English; bringing him up against foreigners speaking English in a former mode): "Verse has been lectured to a treat / Against Escape and being blah", for instance.

It must also be said that I, for one, have never grown accustomed to careless and clumsy places in the verse, however forgivable in a young poet whose intellectual activity, in scope and intensity, was quite staggering. I take an example Empson provides himself, from "Letter II", published as early as June 1926, the author being then twenty-one:

Searching the cave gallery of your face
My torch meets fresco after fresco ravishes
Rebegets me; it crumbles each; no trace
Stays to remind me what each heaven lavishes.

"Which ravishes and rebegets me. The torch crumbles each fresco", says Empson's later note, but we must surely feel that the compression was mainly dictated by the requirement to keep the two lines in question within the bounds of pentameter—though even so the second line is only not an alexandrine by the reader's indulgence in saying "rav'shes" (the same consideration applies to line four). "Lavishes", too, looks like a forced rhyme word.

Other prosodic lapses continue to jar. "They crash and burrow and spill all through skylights" is a pretty excruciating line, though scannable: perhaps clumsiness offends most in the long run. Even a much anthologised poem, "This Last Pain", has a more than tolerable share of this. "And no man's watching, wise and long"—the detachment of the epithets, so unconvincing, is surely a mere demand of rhyme and metre. "All those large dreams by which men long live well"—one cannot believe that the burgundy-and-beef sense of "live well" is intended here, even ambiguously, or that the reason for the verb splitting "long" and "well" is anything but metrical. "These the attentive can handpaint at leisure, / Or most emporia would stock our measure"—again, "emporia" and "leisure" and "measure" seem almost first-draft fulfilments of metrical and rhyming requirements.

It would be otiose to multiply examples, though they strengthen one's conviction that a selected Empson would do no harm, despite the slenderness of the *oeuvre*. This also comes out when considering the other Empsonian characteristic open to self-abuse—ingenuity of image, hardly separable from the opaqueness already referred to. Even with *The God Approached* at one's elbow, the question remains how viable a poem is that requires a fresh teasing out at each re-reading. The enormous gain that ensues when a page is turned and a poem encountered which is sensibly written and reasonably comprehensible is perhaps sufficient answer. A good example is moving from the piled-up allusions, parentheses and clotted syntax of "High Dive" to "Old Lady" (despite in the latter a few warts like the forced and awkward "and seem odd" and the sub-Hopkins "Project her no projectile, plan nor man it"). I am sympathetic to the puzzle-interest element in poetry but for me a good bit of Empson goes beyond the limiting case, as well as disproving any notion that verse deliberately for ambiguity's sake may be profitably undertaken.

IAN HAMILTON HAS spoken (in his book *A Poetry Chronicle*) of some of Empson's poetry being infected with "a lethal germ of silliness", and such a charge remains on the sheet. I believe it attaches more to the colloquial, laconic and off-handedly portentous than to the congealedly obscure. When all this has been taken into account, as well as the verse's deliberate avoidance of observation of the natural world (Janet Adam Smith has described the poet drawing Buddhas in his notebook during a bus journey in the French Alps), it may be asked how much is left to admire. To be sure, the fact that *The God Approached* is neither insane nor sectarian is some evidence of the poetry's real worth, not a mere facet of precocious genius. And even an enemy of the poetry (which I protest I am far from being) must acknowledge some extraordinary virtues—from the individual line (almost at random I take "An even dusked silver of earth and sky", where, also, the prosody *does* work) and individual images (e.g. "to sea Nile only brings / Delta and indecision, who instead / Far back up country does enormous things") to wholly satisfactory poems like "Homage to the British Museum."

Apart from the unique place now occupied by the Professors Gardner's exegesis, the best defence (and celebration) of Empson's poetry I know is Christopher Ricks's fine essay in the *festschrift* edited by Roma Gill, *William Empson: The Man and His Work*—which, however, is a good deal about Empson's criticism and does not plead the

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case for very many of the poems. There is a striking short passage from *Some Versions of Pastoral* quoted by Professor Ricks:

> It [a Romantic and Victorian feeling about children] depends on a feeling . . . that no way of building up character, no intellectual system, can bring out all that is inherent in the human spirit, and therefore that there is more in the child than any man has been able to keep.

If only such thoughts, properly documented (so to speak), were a prominent feature of the poetry!

EMPSON'S CRITICAL PROSE is not free from silliness either, and perhaps a few instances should be given to get the business out of the way. I dislike his approving use of the nerve-rasping term "the kids" for the contemporary young (see the last chapter of *Milton's God* and what seems an earlier instance cited by Professor Ricks—perhaps Empson actually started the thing): luckily the usage seems to be generally disappearing. In this connection may be mentioned Empson's sometimes curious notion of demotic language. I expect this scion of Yorkshire squires would regard himself as close enough to the people to be authoritative in this area but his actual usage (as in the poetry) can smack of the foreigner clever—but not quite clever enough—with idioms. I take two examples from *The Structure of Complex Words*. Talking about sex outside marriage, he says apropos a character from H. G. Wells that he suggested that among well-balanced people it never got further than "a slap and tickle"; and a few pages later he quotes the "proverb" (his definition) "There's allus an If an' a But." Are these phrases any more than theoretically colloquial?

Nevertheless, *The Structure of Complex Words* now seems to me less guilty than once it did of perpetuating—more, exaggerating—the extravagances of the youthful criticism. For instance, though the theoretical chapters might advantageously be without their more outré Richardsisms (the £ sign for value, say), they do contain many remarkable insights. And excesses or follies in the two earlier books must surely be excused because of the young author's amazing wisdom, knowledge and brain-power. He changed the way we read; he imported a new probing, ranging, informal style into criticism; he chose and illuminated from English literature a pregnant anthology of mini-quotations; the issues he dealt with have stayed alive. As to the last point, I am indebted to Dr Norris's book[2] for a good example from *Some Versions*, where Empson observes that the writer under communism "might only exchange a sense of isolation for a sense of the waste of his powers."

WILLIAM EMPSON and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism, as the title indicates, more than reminds us that Empson's critical work has become part of the schools, the in-fighting, the dalliance of intellects, the groves of academe. I fear Dr Norris's book bears the disfiguring birth-marks of the thesis, where every paragraph (sometimes, one wearily thinks, every sentence) starts with some reference discovered in the pursuit of scholarly completeness. He will surely write a better book anon, for he is interesting where his own arguments are allowed to develop (all too briefly). For instance, he says that the criticism rather than the verse comes to find a place for Empson's "complicated feelings and baffled rationality"; and that Empson is always quick to defend "naturalistic humanism." And Dr Norris's homework often pays off rewardingly—for example, in his citings of Empson's early *Granta* reviews.

On the crudest sort of judgment, Empson's critical work must be allowed to have overcome, or at least stood up to, its opponents simply by staying in print (though I think it is not as easy to buy off the shelf as is Leavis's, say). The best case against it that I know of, by that outstanding critic the late James Smith, is conveniently and with typical frankness set out by Empson himself in his preface to the second edition of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. In his notice of the book in 1931, (reprinted in *Shakespearean and Other Essays*), Smith said that the first business of a student of poetry was the passing of a value judgment—which if he made his concern the interpretation of a word, the construing of a sentence, there was a danger of forgetting. In retrospect, Smith's warning perhaps seems more applicable to Empson's epigoni than to Empson himself. In a field where value judgment is particularly important (criticism of one's contemporaries), though Empson has published no book he has done a fair amount of reviewing and thus, unlike Leavis, kept to some degree publicly up to date, possible soft spots to some degree exposed. It would be interesting to see Empson's relations with his contemporaries separately examined: there is the approval of Dylan Thomas's early clotted verse, for instance, and the curiously oblique opinions about Orwell's *1984* in *Milton's God*, both views obviously affected by friendship. And, incidentally, to mention *Milton's God* is to remind oneself that it is here Empson's "naturalistic humanism" operates in modern times, as it were; with its attack on Christianity and neo-Christians, and its equivocal view of communism.

[2] *William Empson and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism*. By CHRISTOPHER NORRIS. University of London, The Athlone Press, £8.95.

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Dr Norris's consecutive pages on this remarkable critical thriller or whodunit are arguably the best in his book and are worth ploughing through to.

It may be thought I have dredged up everything I could think of against Empson, not doing as much for his virtues. But he has had due attention of late, and I thought it right to put my cards on the table. Some remarks (in the *festschrift* referred to) by Professor Rintaro Fukuhara, former head of the English Department at the Tokyo University of Literature and Science where Empson taught before the war, are pertinent so far as I am concerned:

> He was too high-flown a genius for us, indeed, with delicate feeling and profound thought. I used now and then to ask questions on the meaning of his words and phrases found in his poems, and the usual answer was that he could explain the grammar, but could give no interpretation of his thoughts.

How one sympathises with the Professor! Yet the answer to the question posed by my title must be, despite all I have said, in the negative. Our intelligences, such as they are, should try to cope: our instincts are probably already on the favourable side—hence the pleasure at (as Sir William might slangily put it) that new handle.

Upper Grub Street

Non-Academic Critics—By BLAKE MORRISON

THE NOTION of "Grub Street" has been an important one in our literature for the past three centuries, but, as Pat Rogers showed in his excellent *Grub Street: Studies in a Subculture* (1972), it has meant different things at different times. For Pope and Swift, Grub Street was the squalid and noisy opposite of Parnassus; the writers who lived there did so because they were bad at their trade and they deserved only contempt. In the 19th century, as the actual conditions of this "street near Moorfields" began to be forgotten, Grub Street became Bohemian, its inhabitants the true suffering artists of Romantic ideology, their enemies the conformist hypocrites of the drawing-room. In this century Grub Street has come to stand for the world of literary journalism, and its opposite is now thought of as Academe, the world of university teaching. In some respects this is a return to the original meaning, with the writers of Grub Street once again in their proper place as hacks. But there have also been some ironic transformations. Pope's topography had Grub Street at the trivial periphery of things, whereas Leavisite critics have tended to treat it as the controlling centre; and Pope's charges against the hacks—that they were dull, heavy, nitpicking and unreadable—are the charges more commonly made today against academics.

The conflict between literary journalists and academics has made for some lively debate over the last ten years. Anyone wishing to follow it in more detail might begin by consulting the epilogue of John Gross's *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (1969), Peter Porter's essay "Grub Street v. Academe" (*New Review*, July 1974), part one of Garry Watson's *The Leavises, the Social and the Left* (1977), the chapter "The Reviewing Establishment" in John Sutherland's *Fiction and the Fiction Industry* (1978), and Auberon Waugh's review of this (last) study in *Books and Bookmen* (May 1978). But there is no need to research very deeply to be aware of the arguments involved.

On one side the journalists accuse academics of being boring and pedantic, of adopting an incomprehensible and jargon-ridden critical "discourse" (a word which, they, the journalists, hate), and of driving away the common reader. On the other side, the academics accuse journalists of being flip and lightweight, of eroding critical standards, of promoting only the safe and second-rate. Each party claims to be the true servant of literature and charges the other with bad writing and bad faith. And each has a favourite enemy from the other camp, one to be derided gleefully whenever the opportunity arises. For academics it is the reviewer who attacked or failed to notice the big name X while praising some soon-to-be-forgotten nonentity Y; time has proved this reviewer to be a fool. The reviewers, for their part, make merry with that equally laughable figure, the Ph.D. student, the can't-see-the-wood-for-the-trees researcher who is wasting his time and "our" money on some topic of mind-boggling inconsequence which has probably in any case (for haven't all research topics?) "already been done."

As someone who has spent his last couple of years as both Ph.D. student and reviewer, I am reluctant to accept that there's much truth in these stereotypes of the "Grubbean" and the "Grubber." And yet I'm not any more convinced by those who have recently tried to mediate and to show that the worlds of journalism and of teaching are not, after

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all, so very different. One takes the point: a great deal of weekly reviewing is carried out by university lecturers; successful passages have been made from one colony to the other, with Karl Miller moving from an editing career into a professorship and David Caute from an academic career into editing; there is the shared aim of insightful criticism and (quaint and problematic though the term may sound) of "good writing." But there remain both the crucial economic differences between the two professions and the different traditions behind them. To take a slight but not entirely trivial example: no university lecturer would be likely to mention, as Clive James does when explaining that the title of his new collection of essays comes from a Greek Street pub, the working hours he has frittered away in drink; there is nothing to suggest that such activity happens any less frequently in Academe, but to allude to it would not accord with university ideology of the earnest scholar earnestly engaged in teaching and research. Grub Street, though, has its tradition of licence and excess, and the consumer expects a sprinkling of gossip and personal items of this kind.

THERE IS ALSO the matter of the different origins of the two professions. Where universities can claim an ancestry of the Greek Sophists or the *studia generalia* of the medieval period, the heritage of the reviewing profession looks short and undistinguished. It goes back, in Britain, to 18th-century periodicals like the *British Critic* and the *Monthly, Critical, Analytical* and *English* Reviews, all commonly believed to have been "kept alive by publishers to promote the sale of their own books." As Derek Roper shows in what is the fullest account so far of these early Reviews,[1] it was Smollett in 1755 who gave rise to this belief—he spoke of "obscure Hackney Writers, accidentally enlisted in the Service of an undistinguishing Bookseller . . . wretched Hirelings, without Talent, Candour, Spirit or Circumspection"— and it was strengthened down the years by John Forster's *Life of Goldsmith*, by Walter Scott and by the 1915 *Cambridge History of English Literature*. The belief has been influential: many of the criticisms made against the first reviewers—that their motives were impure and commercial, that they wrote "puffs" for friends, that they too often simply "gutted" the contents of books—are ones still made today against their descendants. Roper's defence of the early Reviews therefore has a more-than-ordinary significance: it tries to show that the world of literary journalism can claim a more dignified ancestry than has previously been supposed.

Roper's case is certainly persuasive. The early Reviews were not, as is often said, distributed free of charge but were sold competitively, and *had* to be more than "puffing machines" in order to survive; indeed Dr Roper finds only two examples of indisputably corrupt practice—one an article on *Fanny Hill* by its publisher, the other two reviews by Goldsmith of a book for which he'd written an introduction. Contributors to the early Reviews included Sheridan, Southey, Mary Wollstonecraft, Beddoes, Johnson, Hume, Coleridge and Fuseli—not exactly obscure or talentless hacks. The Reviews provided a systematic record of as many new publications as possible, and allowances of space could be generous: the *Lyrical Ballads*, for example, received an eight-page review in the *Monthly* and a five-page one in the *Critical* (no modern collection would be so lucky). Dr Roper concedes that reviewers too often settled for a "guided tour" of a book's contents, and that they tended to be —as Hazlitt put it—"somewhat precise and prudish, gentle almost to a fault, full of . . . courtesy and good manners." But he finds this preferable to the opinionation and verbosity that came along with the *Edinburgh*, sharing the opinion of Samuel Parr in 1795 that "there is no one Review in this country, but what is conducted with a considerable degree of ability."

DEREK ROPER'S method of assessing a "good" or "successful" Review is not, however, altogether convincing. For him success is entirely a matter of picking winners—that is, of pronouncing worthwhile writers whom we in the 20th century acknowledge as worthwhile. By this criterion the early Reviews turn out to be better than successors like the *Edinburgh*: in poetry they "praised Smart; welcomed Burns; gave Moore, Wordsworth, Coleridge and the early Southey more favourable notices than they were to get from the major periodicals of the early nineteenth century"; and there was a similar "success rate" in the reception of fiction, history, biography, and political and religious writings. But this method of evaluating the Reviews, ignoring as it does controversy, liveliness, the establishing of taste and consensus, is surely a very odd one, and the longer Roper proceeds with his statistical approach—"On [*sic*] the 255 articles discussed, 121 may be called satisfactory pieces of reviewing. A success rate of 48% . . ."—the more ill-adapted it seems.

He also shows undue leniency towards what Leavis called the "social-personal ('club . . .') principle" of the London reviewing world. At one point he reprints a fascinating correspondence in which William Taylor, having been pressed by the *Monthly*'s editor Ralph Griffiths not to attack a

[1] *Reviewing before the Edinburgh, 1788–1802*. By DEREK ROPER. Methuen, £12.50.

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certain author ("One thing I have to mention, *entre nous*, [is] that Mr. M. is *one of us*"), replies that "when my opinion happens not to coincide with your wishes, I shall simply decline transmitting it." Roper's verdict is that "the exchange is creditable to both men; and to expect higher standards . . . , then or now, would be naïve." Refreshingly pragmatic, maybe, but I'd have thought that such willingness to lean and to be leant on ought not to be so readily excused.

One important point to emerge from *Reviewing before the Edinburgh* is that the early reviewers were less specialists than general "men of letters", and were expected to be able to take on a wide range of subjects. It is often said that this tradition has long since died out and that specialisation prevails. But a survey of current reviewing does, I think, suggest that as far as editors and publishers are concerned the opinion of the non-specialist is still highly valued. When it comes to preserving and collecting reviews, this is even more the case. Of four writers recently to have published collections of literary essays, C. H. Sisson, Edgell Rickword, Robert Conquest and Clive James, not one is a lecturer in English. They are not quite perhaps "men of letters" either, and their careers and attitudes differ widely. But what they have in common indicates the persistence in our culture of a non-academic critical tradition. Each is a poet. Each has taken an active and frequently controversial interest in politics. Each would maintain that to review for the weekly press need not be a betrayal of intellectual standards but, properly managed, a useful and influential activity. Each, in short, seeks to occupy the middle ground between Grub Street and Academe.

THE MATTER OF Grub Street and Academe is well treated in "The Comedy of Criticism", an essay from C. H. Sisson's new collection,[2] which describes the "vast mass of indifferent to useless" books coming out of English departments as "as much hack work as any piece of literary journalism." Very little of Sisson's own criticism has ever been hack work, and though this massive collection should have been reduced (much of it already exists in book form), its bulkiness is a fair indication of how large Sisson nowadays looms.

The "Sisson phenomenon", as his recent emergence has been called, is a curious one. He published his first work in 1937, but up until this decade was little known; now there is talk of his "central" contribution to English letters. There are several reasons for this development. One is his increased output: nearly half the work listed in the bibliography has appeared during the 1970s, and as an editor of *Poetry Nation Review* and regular contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement* since 1975 he has had ample opportunity to express his views. His collected poems, *In The Trojan Ditch*, were well received in 1974, and his work has been championed by Donald Davie, Michael Schmidt and Robert Nye.

There has also, it seems, been a new (old) spirit abroad, a *Zeitgeist* receptive to Sisson's constitutionalist stand; it is hard to imagine his emphasis upon the law, church and monarchy having gone down so well in the 1960s or even 1950s. Sisson's unfashionableness is indeed part of what has made him fashionable: he has been co-opted in a myth which treats resistance to the current as a self-evident virtue. This theme is evident throughout Michael Schmidt's introduction to the essays, which praises Sisson's avoidance of "*fashionable* critical and ideological formulas", of "*modish* political errors" and of the "*mandatory* left-orientation of his 1930s intellectual contemporaries" (my italics). What could be thought a perverse desire to swim against the tide is treated here, reverently, as gritty independence, a mark of wisdom.

SISSON SOMETIMES complains that his views are misrepresented, but the several accounts which he gives here of his early intellectual development should leave us in no doubt of what he believes. Coming from a working-class environment, he tells us, he resented the upper-middle-class socialism of Auden and Spender as a talking-down:

> "I could not help noticing that when they spoke of the workers it was as if they were speaking of people in some far-off fairyland or alternatively of a remote race of South Sea islanders or of a favourite breed of beetles."

Alienated from the Left, he was under no illusions either about Hitler, having observed Nazism at first hand while studying in Germany. But during a period in Paris in the mid-1930s he came across the (for him) more palatable Right-wing politics of Charles Maurras, which held that

> "A royal house was more likely than any other political invention to secure a nation's coherence and persistence from generation to generation. . . . The identification of the king's interest with that of the nation . . . has been a *point acquis* with me ever since."

Returning home in 1937, and embarking on a long career in the Civil Service, Sisson began to apply Maurras's ideas to an analysis of English politics, and to argue for the need to respect ancient institutions—not only the monarchy but also the

[2] *The Avoidance of Literature: Collected Essays*. By C. H. SISSON. Carcanet, £7.90.

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church (he had himself baptised at the age of thirty-nine). His stance ever since has been that of a sceptical Johnsonian Tory sent to put straight the factional and credulous Whigs who dominate "the great mess we all live in." This last kind of fulmination, an inevitable accompaniment to any reference to the present, seems to be a large part of Sisson's appeal: there are many people, young as well as old, who want to believe that they've never had it so bad, and Sisson—dry, sarcastic and severe—is an articulate confirmer of the suspicion.

The question of Sisson's politics is considered in a recent issue of *Stand*,[3] where Jon Silkin in particular seeks to present him as a man with a sinister purpose. Sisson's antagonism towards democracy, his mocking of such phrases as "equality" and the "Rights of Man", his relegation of noble ideals to "cant"—these certainly make an unattractive picture. He can also be naive and insensitive: after the National Front's appearance at the 1974 elections it should not have been possible for him to write "I have never heard, in London or elsewhere, of an English movement." But one would have to be reacting to Sisson's politics with excessive solemnity, something which his wry and playful tone expressly forbids, in order to feel that they were worth getting in a stew over. Indeed the astonishing thing is surely that his ideas should be treated seriously at all, for their cranky premise—that the nation's interest can be identified with the monarch's—is one for which there is very little support in English history. Sisson claims that his approach to the monarchy is not emotional but constitutional, but I can see only sentimental humbug in a claim such as the following:

> "So long as we have the queen, her heirs and successors, England could remain conscious of herself and give play to her deepest energies even after the most appalling national catastrophes."

Many of Sisson's political views are shared by Donald Davie, but as a critic Sisson seems to me to fall a long way short of his co-editor. It is true that his essays and reviews, especially the recent ones, are debunking and often astute. A piece like "Poetry and Myth", which takes up Larkin's remarks on "the myth-kitty", can offer some useful correctives. But there is something rather pedestrian in his series of essays on the Modernists. He does not open up areas of a writer's work in the way that Davie can, and though a great provoker in politics, does not as a literary critic have Davie's capacity to generate further investigation and debate.

WHAT EDGELL RICKWORD thinks of C. H. Sisson I do not know. All that can be said is that he is as staunch a defender of Cromwell's republic as Sisson is an opponent of it, and that back in the 1930s he was critical of monarchist "neo-Tories." But we have it on record that Sisson (and it might make those who label him an intolerant Rightist pause a moment) regards Rickword as an "old warrior" of great integrity—"one that was never oversized, and is not threatened with diminution." The comment is to be found in a special Rickword celebration in *PN Review*,[4] an essential supplement to the recently published volume of essays,[5] and one that contains reminiscences and tributes from William Empson, Jack Lindsay, Christopher Hill, Julian Symons and many others. It is Empson's which stands out:

> There was a time, around 1929, when Edgell Rickword was the Sage of Fitzroy Tavern in Charlotte Street; much jostled by other sages, and very unassertive, indeed he could hardly be got to speak, and then hardly above a whisper, but he was the real one, if you happened to know.

Rickword's taciturnity, a phenomenon mentioned by several other contributors, has in the past helped to shroud his career in mystery, but we are now much better placed to understand its various phases. In the 1920s his energy went into lyric poetry, into the editing of the influential *Calendar of Modern Letters*, and into reviewing for the London weeklies: there was little promise at this stage of the Marxism to come. But by the early 1930s he had become a member of the Communist Party, and went on to edit first the *Left Review* (1936–37) and later, through the 1940s, *Our Time*. As Jack Beeching, E. P. Thompson and David Holbrook fascinatingly recall, Rickword's editing of the last of these magazines ran him into trouble with the Party: he was asked to explain alleged financial and ideological misdemeanours and was denounced in King Street as a "revisionist." But Rickword received the denunciations quietly, remaining loyal to the party until Hungary in 1956, at which point (again quietly, for it is still not generally known) he resigned. Between 1944 and 1970 he seems to have written hardly at all, but there has been a recent burst of work on English radicals—Cruikshank, Hone, Thelwall, Cobbett.

RICKWORD'S EARLY CRITICISM, which includes his famous review of *The Waste Land*, was collected five years ago.[6] The present volume picks up the

[3] See *Stand*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1979, which includes essays by Sisson himself, Jon Silkin, Donald Davie, E. P. Thompson and Cairns Craig.

[4] *PN Review*, No. 9 (1979), £1.90.

[5] *Literature in Society: Essays and Opinions (II), 1931–1978*. By EDGELL RICKWORD. Carcanet, £6.90.

[6] *Essays and Opinions (I), 1921–31*. Carcanet, 1974.

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story in 1931, and its prime value is in enabling us to see how this sharp-minded critic responded to the literature of the next ten years. The severity of Rickword's verdicts on names usually thought to be more prestigious than his own is bound to continue the current revaluation of 1930s literature. Spender is seen "seeking to safeguard himself from having to take sides" through an "attempt to place literature 'above the battle'." Day Lewis's poetry is "infected with the feeling that struggle is transitory, and that 'afterwards' we shall get down to work." Auden in his early work "expresses, more poetically than any of his contemporaries, the feeling of insecurity that afflicts a section of the middle class", but by 1937 he and Isherwood are judged to be "evading the issue."

Most incisive of all is Rickword's reaction to a 1941 *TLS* leader which had suggested that war might lead to a renaissance in English poetry; this, Rickword argues, exposes

> the bankruptcy of middle-class literary theory, which can prescribe no other remedy for the rejuvenation of our literature than a periodical blood-bath in which a large proportion of its potential creators must be destroyed.

The other value of this collection is to establish that Rickword's contribution to the English Marxist tradition, so shamefully overlooked for so many years (David Craig's *Marxists on Literature* does not even bother to justify omitting him), is a substantial one. There are, it is true, some embarrassingly naive pronouncements: like many others in the 1930s he sentimentalised Soviet culture, and his claim in 1936 that "the Soviet Union is the only country where this problem of giving a meaning to art has ceased to exist" would sound sinister in the extreme if it were made today. And as his attacks on surrealism show, he had less success in accommodating Modernist art within a Marxist framework than has the New Left of the present. But for his time he possessed an unusually subtle grasp of the relationship between literature and ideology, and though no great theoretician himself, understood that theory need not be a sterile exercise: in 1935 we find him attacking, exactly as current Marxists and structuralists do, that "contempt for theory" which English empiricism encourages. It is to be hoped that any future definition of the English Marxist tradition will give Rickword his due.

RICKWORD FIRST MADE HIS NAME in weeklies like the *TLS* and *New Statesman*. So, almost 50 years later, did Clive James, though there the resemblances stop. Attitudes to James's standing as a critic vary widely, and the new collection of essays[7] is unlikely to change previously-held opinions. In some academic circles he is regarded as the most weekly of weekly reviewers, a bullying but ephemeral figure; and C. H. Sisson has let it be known that he "would not think it a very great cruelty to be made fun of by Clive James; surely it would be more damaging to be praised by him." But James himself has always aspired to a nobler ideal, that of "the metropolitan critic", and he has described the mode in which he and his favourite forbear Edmund Wilson specialise—the short literary-journalistic essay—as "one of the key forms in modern critical writing."

Editors and publishers seem to agree: in Grub Street James is considered to be not only the safest guarantor of "good copy" in the business, but a critic whose observations deserve to be reprinted and preserved. In his long poem about the hapless upstart Peregrine Prykke, James warned that the literary world is a hard one in which the talentless cannot survive for long, and his own prose has occasionally suffered from the pressures of competition: his need to keep on proving himself faster and cleverer than the next man does not permit much passive or tentative reflection. It is rare, for example, to find him acknowledging—as he does when he refers to the "self-designed, home-constructed apparatus of formalistic priggery" that kept him from Whitman "for ten years"—any possible failing in his critical make-up: such vulnerabilities are normally concealed under a shell of bristling expertise. But with a decade's work and two collections of essays behind him, he has some right to feel proud at having stood the pace. The pressure of meeting deadlines may sometimes prevent the important things from getting said; but it can also, now and again, concentrate the mind wonderfully.

At the Pillars of Hercules takes in, among others, Auden, Larkin, Lowell, Wittgenstein, Chandler, Solzhenitsyn, Crossman and Kennedy. Its chief limitation is that insight never seems to match enthusiasm: James can tell you, clearly and entertainingly, *how much* he admires a writer, but when he attempts to tell you *why* he is lost—or at least hard up—for words. He once mocked the vagueness of Leavis's criterion of "felt life", but Leavis looks rigorously scientific when he is set alongside wafflings such as these: "by now the quality of his intelligence should be obvious to all", "you must helplessly concede that the vitality of his language is unique", "his visualising faculty reveals itself for the hundredth time as a profound gift."

It is not so much that James praises indiscriminately, but that he praises extravagantly and without a due sense of how vague his praises sound. This is puzzling because he admires clarity

[7] *At the Pillars of Hercules*. By CLIVE JAMES. Faber, £7.95.

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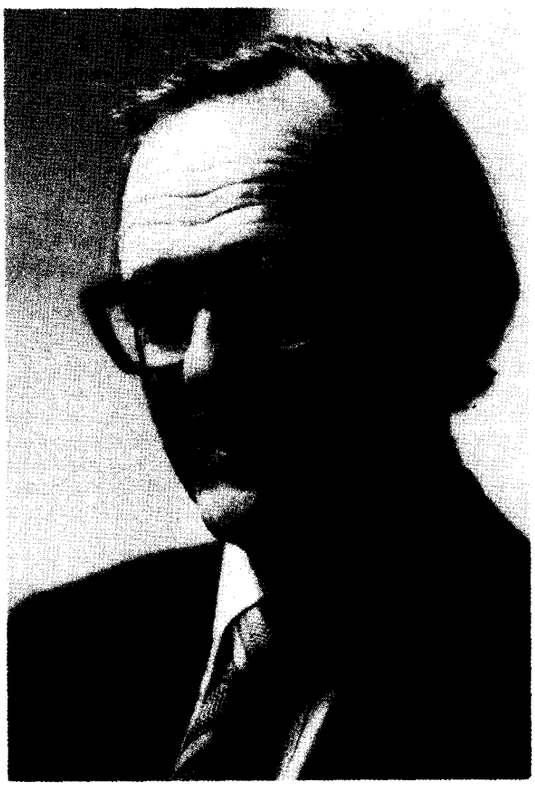

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and assertiveness in others, and is normally capable of laying things on the line himself. He is also very attentive to faltering or evasiveness in those whom he writes about. It is something which he notices and deplores in Lillian Hellman, and it constitutes the main theme of his good piece "Farewelling Auden", which argues that Auden's need to conceal his homosexuality was what forced him "from the concrete to the abstract. . . . A born master of directness was obliged to find a language for indirection." The essays are full of such challenging theses, but at crucial moments of evaluation James can't offer the reader anything very firm to hold on to.

HIS OTHER MAIN WEAKNESS as a critic, as I think a number of reviewers have already pointed out, is his failure to find a mid-point between the lemon and the laurel, between tart severity and the fulsome bestowing of honours. The point is well illustrated in his essay on Tom Stoppard, "Count Zero Splits the Infinite" (James is fond of physics and astronomy metaphors), where he prefaces his excessive adulation of Stoppard with a short history of his distaste for theatre-going:

> "I go very rarely to the theatre for what seems to me the sound reason that anything so repellent in occasional doses would most probably be fatal if the doses were frequent."

It is not a very original position—there has been, from Kingsley Amis onwards, a strong post-war tradition of theatre-hating—but it is a useful strategy for making acceptable the idolatry that follows: by hating Pinter, Storey, Anderson and Hopkins, he then feels free to love Stoppard "without reserve" (just as by slating most television he is freed to adore most high art).

As a critic Clive James is sometimes served badly by his lack of a qualifying voice. But this is also the secret of his success as a humorist. A full analysis of this humour would, of course, have to be undertaken by the Jake Balokowsky researcher-figure whom James pokes fun at in his essay on Larkin; and it would have to take note of the "inversion method" which he uses in his hilarious piece on Lord Longford—"There has always been a disturbing hint of normality about [Lord Longford's] otherwise impeccably absurd behaviour." But for the most part James is funny because he exaggerates, overstates, takes to a ludicrous extreme—and the intrusion of any sensible "middling" English voice would ruin the effect.

ONE OF THE BOOKS praised by Clive James, and one that has influenced his political outlook, is Robert Conquest's study of the Soviet purges, *The Great Terror. The Abomination of Moab*, Conquest's first and almost certainly only collection of literary essays,[8] is a slighter work but no less serious in its concerns. It takes its title from a 1970 ENCOUNTER essay in which Conquest saw the danger to art at the present time as coming not from the Philistines, who care nothing for culture, but from the Moabites, who love it not wisely but too well, smothering it with theses, footnotes, and second-rate interpretation. Once upon a time the enemies of art made their living as journalists; now, says Conquest, they are housed in universities:

> In the old days no one paid much attention to the low-level critics. They knew their place: Grub Street. But in the first decades of this century the foundation of English schools and departments in the universities suddenly gave them status. Alf Shagpen, wheedling the price of a pint of porter from the editor of *Blackwood's*, became Doctor A. Shagpen, D. Litt., author of *Texture and Tension in Thomas Traherne.*

Conquest writes on many different subjects in this collection—poetry, translation, politics, pornography, science fiction—but the same concern to expose and take issue with a Moabite "line" runs

[8] *The Abomination of Moab.* By ROBERT CONQUEST. Maurice Temple Smith, £7.95.

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through every essay. Moabites worship Ezra Pound and free verse; Conquest defends Kipling and the Georgians, and attacks what he calls the "Pound hoax", which has turned this "ill-read" and "minimal talent" into a supposed major poet. Moabites believe in a liberal approach to translation; Conquest restores literal translation, attacking the theory and practice of George Steiner ("a dupe of Moab's glittering ideology"), Louis Zukofsky and Robert Lowell. Moabites equate difficulty and obscurity in literature with profundity; Conquest retorts that this is self-interested chicanery: the only reason that academics extol difficulty is to keep themselves employed as elucidators. Moabites work inside closed or monopolistic intellectual systems such as the Freudian, the Marxist and the Christian; Conquest sees this as totalitarianism in thought and praises "individual" thinkers like Orwell.

WHEN CONQUEST IS NOT attacking the Moabites he is parodying them. His spoof versions of their interpretative tracts are littered with pseudo-erudition and bogus bibliographies. "*Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the Light of Dürfian Psychology" purports to justify psychoanalytical approaches to literature; but Conquest's Dürfianism, an inversion of Freud which takes Lawrence's sexual images to signify his "repressed wish to be an airman", is really an attack on the licence whereby "anything may symbolise anything." His other parody, "Christian Symbolism in *Lucky Jim*", achieved a striking success when it appeared in *Critical Quarterly* in 1965: despite its wild interpretations—Dixon's "hallaher" on the phone is read as a "hallelujah", and his standing at the lectern is said to symbolise crucifixion—some readers took it seriously. Conquest admits his astonishment over this: as he says, "there can hardly be a real book called *The Phallus Theme in Early Amis*." But then a recent reference guide to writings about Amis (and I can assure Robert Conquest that this is no joke) lists a Ph.D. called "Role Playing in the Fiction of Kingsley Amis: A Transactional Analysis" and another, "The Quest for Self in the Early Novels of Kingsley Amis", which applies to the novels "the quest pattern in Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*." Dixon's reaction, I'm sure, would have been to make his Martian face.

As this suggests, Conquest does sometimes hit the mark very successfully. But the high jinks also grow tiresome after a while, and the suspicion develops that, erudite though he undoubtedly is, Conquest is too ready to dismiss too much: having found one critic or modernist to be a phoney, he's tempted to write off the whole lot. Worse, he begins to praise the neglected very largely because it *is* neglected, assuming that any writer or subject not

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taken up by "trendies" and "experts" (who, anyway, are these? there's a conspicuous failure to name names) must automatically be worthy of esteem. The strains of this position show up clearly in his essays on science fiction where, discovering that this area is suddenly becoming popular among *literati*, he is left to plead only that he got there first, and that the best science fiction is the least literary. In this as in other cases, Conquest seems not to have arrived at a position but to have been forced into it through a need to dissociate himself from other (supposedly wrong-headed) intellectuals. And the stubborness required to defy the Moabites proves, in matters of literary judgment, to be severely detrimental.

V. S. PRITCHETT is a more extreme example of the non-academic critic, so downmarket that he criticises novels for being "wordy" and feels bound to apologise for such "bookish comment" as he ventures to make. *The Myth Makers*[9] is a sort of plain man's guide to world fiction, and its critical rule-of-thumb seems to be "if in doubt, re-tell the story; if still in doubt, quote at length."

The fictional landscape on to which it looks is a reassuringly traditional one—a place in which storytellers of "passion" and "genius" write novels containing "character", "incident", and "style" (even the likes of Borges, Kafka and Marquez end up sounding like eminent Victorians). As criticism it looks archaic and middlebrow, but every so often Pritchett nudges you to recall that, being a novelist himself, he knows about these things from the inside; and once in a while he convinces you that he does. It's hard, though, to see much justification for a collection which consists not of general essays but of reviews of particular editions and translations. The publishers have done their best to disguise this, for there are no dates, no acknowledgments, no prefaces and no footnotes. But when the reader turns up the Kafka essay and finds puzzling references to "the present translation of the *Briefe*", he will realise why tucked away at the back of the collection there is a "List of Books."

The first English edition of Montale's essays[10] is, in one respect, similarly infuriating. It would not have been very difficult to have dated the essays, and since they represent 50 years of work and contain sentences like "I met Eliot two years ago at the house of Princess Bassiano in Rome", even non-specialist readers are clearly going to wonder when

[9] *The Myth Makers: Essays on European, Russian and South American Novelists.* By V. S. PRITCHETT. Chatto & Windus, £5.95.

[10] *Selected Essays.* By EUGENIO MONTALE. Translated by G. Singh. Carcanet, £6.50.

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exactly they were written. That said, it should be stressed that this is a collection well worth having, one which lets us see this major poet's reaction not only to his Italian predecessors, but to many of the principal American and European Modernists. For an English reader there is a certain amount of culture-gap to come to terms with: to find the Auden generation being described as "modern poets of anguished boredom" seems odd and off-course. But of their kind, and especially when they deal with Italian literature and Fascism, the essays are exemplary: though nearly all written to tight deadlines and with severe restrictions of space (Montale earns his living as a reviewer), they are sharp, simple and insightful—*giornalismo* at its best.

Shaping Destinies

On Shakespeare—By J. I. M. STEWART

E. M. W. TILLYARD'S *Shakespeare's History Plays* was published in 1944, forty years after A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*, and within its own field has been scarcely less influential than Bradley's work. It tells us that with the appearance of Professor Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being* in 1936 our eyes were opened, so that we now see something of which we were wholly unaware before: that what the Elizabethans adored, and everywhere found widely evidenced, was the "solemn and joyful" fact that they "lived in an ordered universe, where there was no waste, and where every detail was part of nature's plan." The subverting of this order, always displeasing to God, was never more heinous than in that act of usurpation by which Henry Bolingbroke seized the English crown, and Shakespeare's history plays are dedicated to expounding God's consequent imposition of a curse on the house of Lancaster until, again through Divine Guidance, Richmond triumphs on Bosworth Field. In all this Shakespeare is represented as much under the influence of Edward Hall, whose *Chronicle* plugs the "Tudor Myth" in the most pious manner.

In *The Lost Garden* [1] it is part of John Wilders's task to expose these ideas as near-nonsense—which he does with all academic decency. Scholars have recently shown that there was no predominant Tudor Myth, but as many myths as there were sides to the dynastic quarrel. Nor was Hall a convinced Divine-Judgment man. On the contrary, he was an urbane sceptic—and one (we may add) not without Gibbonian felicities. "Peace was thought to discende oute of heaven into England" is his comment on Richmond's victory. And on the agreement between France and England he can write thus:

> This peace was said to be made, onely by the holy ghoste, because that on the day of metying, a white dove satte on the very toppe of the kyng of Englandes tent: whether she sat there to drie her, or came thether as a token, geven by God, I referre it to your judgemente.

But the main point ought never to have been obscure to us: it is the extreme improbability of a mind such as Shakespeare's accepting, in the age of Montaigne, a naive providentialism as the key to universal history. Tillyard—we may succinctly put Mr Wilders's case—has confounded what people say in the plays with what the plays say.

Bringing the English and Roman history plays together has two consequences: it establishes the entire historical panorama exhibited by the dramatist as Plutarchian in essence, and it places all these "histories" as close to "tragedy."

To understand history we have to understand the characters of the men who shape it, and it is in private and domestic situations that these are most likely to be revealed to us. For Plutarch "oftentimes a light occasion, a word, or some sporte makes mens naturall dispositions and maners appeare more plaine, then the famous battells wonne", and in the minds of Shakespeare's historical characters personal and political motives are so combined and confused as to be inseparable. Political disasters are regularly shown as personal disasters too, and this is the dramatist's means of making them human and vivid to us. But although for Shakespeare history is shaped by powerful individuals who are thus central to the plays we are always made conscious that what is chiefly being portrayed is "the continuing life of a nation." It is the sense of this larger continuity that distinguishes the histories from the regular tragedies to which they otherwise closely approximate:

> The history plays . . . contain a series of tragedies of fate or fortune but these tragedies convey a sense of pathos or pathetic irony, absent from the plays usually considered tragedies, since the deaths of the protagonists are

[1] *The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays*. By JOHN WILDERS. Macmillan Press, £6.50, paper £2.95.

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> deprived of the significance of finality by the larger, continuing movement of history in the context of which these deaths occur.

But if God's providence is absent from the spectacle, what is it that the history plays do reveal? They reveal a baffling world from which God's will is concealed; a postlapsarian condition

> in which the solution of one problem creates problems of another kind, in which men thrive or suffer in ways which do not correspond to any ideal principles of justice, and choices are forced upon them, not between right and wrong, but between various courses of action all more or less unsatisfactory.... Shakespeare portrays history as a struggle by succeeding generations of men to establish ideal worlds which are beyond their powers to create.

It is here that the history plays come close to the theological idea of a fallen humanity, and it is thus that Mr Wilders finds the title for his book. But they also come close to the belief of Machiavelli "that injustice, calamity and frustration are a normal state of affairs and that their ultimate causes lie beyond our comprehension." All this sounds distinctly glum. But Mr Wilders is well aware that the history plays are not "mournful, depressing works." They are full of "abundant and zestful life", and there is something exhilarating in the stubborn vitality with which the characters "set about the impossible task of shaping their destinies."

FROM THIS wide-ranging and important book we move to what the bibliographies call specialised studies. Frances A. Shirley, a fly-leaf tells me, is the author of *Shakespeare's Use of Off-stage Sounds*. The late Richmond Noble wrote an excellent and now almost forgotten book called *Shakespeare's Use of Song*, but here surely is something of less interest to Euterpe or Polyhymnia: tuckets and sennets and alarms. So what about *Swearing and Perjury in Shakespeare's Plays*?[2] Professor Shirley has managed about 85,000 words on this, and may thus rashly be supposed apt for a good laugh. Nothing of the sort. In places her book is undeniably a little lacking in excitement, but that is a disability which scholarship has to accept often enough. And hers is scholarship of the authentic kind. We are given an amply documented survey of the seriousness with which the Elizabethans regarded—or the comical fuss they made about—every degree of swearing from the almost harmless "I protest" to the horrific "zounds." Throughout the plays Shakespeare's characters swear or noticeably refrain from swearing. When they do swear they commonly employ this oath or that in strict accordance with both their individual dispositions and their place in society; Hotspur will be recalled as rebuking his wife for a breach of decorum in this regard when she swears in a non-U fashion "like a comfit-maker's wife." The dramatist's exactness in these matters appears to have become a point of pride with him, and when the blasphemy law of 1606 came along he took considerable trouble to cope with the new situation. And fortunately:

> by 1606... Shakespeare not only had had practice in working with a few pagan oaths, but also possessed the skill to employ the mildest oaths effectively by limiting their numbers so that they, too, could stand out at important moments rather than being submerged in a mass of casual swearing.

Censorship at the time of printing impairs our knowledge of what Shakespeare first wrote, but very adequate materials remain for Professor Shirley to show "how much can be achieved by the careful use of swearing." "Strangely", she adds, "no one seems to have examined this aspect of the plays." So here is an odd and thoroughgoing pioneer study.

MURRAY J. LEVITH is also something of a pioneer. He has learnt from Professor Harry Levin that except for one or two German dissertations "the field of Shakespearean nomenclature is wide open, and constitutes an inviting pasture to browse in." The result is *What's in Shakespeare's Names*,[3] and the pasture proves not all that extensive. Shakespeare took many of his names from history, and many either direct or with some modification from romance. When he made his own choice, or followed his own invention, he was no precursor of Henry James. There are no Christopher Newmans, Adam Ververs, Prince Amerigos or Mrs Lowders in the plays, but for the low or comic characters there are plenty of tag names: Bottom, Snout, Dull, Shallow, Silence. There is not much to be said about them. When Shakespeare dwells on a name it is usually in the interest of a quibble of the "Old Gaunt indeed, and gaunt in being old" order. Johnson thought poorly of this sort of thing, calling it Shakespeare's fatal Cleopatra. Still, if one is to make a book out of the names this habit must be fully exhibited. So take *Love's Labour's Lost*:

> Berowne sounds like the English word *brown* meaning, in one sense, "sober." It provides the occasion for Rosaline's pun:

[2] *Swearing and Perjury in Shakespeare's Plays*. By FRANCES A. SHIRLEY. Allen & Unwin, £8.50.

[3] *What's in Shakespeare's Names*. By MURRAY J. LEVITH. Allen & Unwin, £8.50.

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Berowne they call him, but a merrrier man,
Within the limit of becoming mirth,
I never spent an hour's talk withal,

This is right enough, although it is not Mr Levith's discovery. "Brown" carries the sense preserved in our phrase "a brown study." But why does Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night* declare that he would as lief be a Brownist as a politician? And besides Robert Browne of the Independency was there yet a further Brown behaving in a gloomy way in England at the time of the play's writing? At least there was Giordano Bruno, perhaps referred to elsewhere in *Love's Labour's Lost*, who is described by John Florio (who has also been supposed to have his niche in the play) as a tourist it was quite impossible to cheer up. So are there any *other* puns or quibbles of the nomenclatory variety lurking in this scene? There are. Berowne's companions, the shadowy Longaville and Dumaine, who both escape Mr Levith's annotatory zeal, have their names laboriously punned upon by Maria and Katharine near the start. It is all very trivial, perhaps, but in a play crammed with verbal ingenuities less uninteresting than the fact that "Boyet and Mercade, too, are names chosen for their French flavor." Thus I fear it must be said that Mr Levith, having written down the names of most of the characters in the plays, has simply annotated them (to put it a shade unkindly) with anything that comes into his head. Is Shakespeare's craft much illustrated by the information that Sir Toby Belch's first name "derives from the Hebrew *Tobhiyah* for 'the Lord is good'"? And what are we to make of the persuasion that "the latinate ending of Polonius allows a certain dignity to the name", or that "when spoken rapidly aloud, Olivia comes close to 'I love you'"? Something like desperation often seems to attend the strength with which Mr Levith squeezes his learned orange.

ONLY BEGOTTEN SONNETS[4] brings bad news for Dr A. L. Rowse. The Dark Lady is *not* Emilia Lanier, for the conclusive reason that no Dark Lady ever existed except as a poetic abstraction invented by Shakespeare to personify the reprehensible side of the Lovely Boy. The Lovely Boy himself was real enough, having been—as so many exegetes believe—the youthful Earl of Southampton. S. C. Campbell's astonishing reading of an ancient riddle has been accorded witty expression on the dust-jacket of his wholly serious book. On the front is the familiar portrait of Southampton by Peter Oliver in the Fitzwilliam Museum. On the back is the negative photographic

[4] *Only Begotten Sonnets*. By S. C. CAMPBELL. Bell & Hyman, £8.95.

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image of the same portrait, showing a Southampton who is very dark indeed, although necessarily with brilliant white hair and beard. I have to confess that this piece of fun inclines me at once towards Mr Campbell's camp (which is perhaps the right word). I am perturbed by the memory of several sonnets which the new thesis (only the latest, after all, of many allegorical interpretations of the poems) is not readily to be harmonised with; and correspondingly cheered on finding that Mr Campbell has "left room for the possibility . . . that a pre-existing short cycle to a dark lady could have been turned to account for the purposes of the sequence." His arguments and manipulations (including a reordering of the poems to admit of the Lovely Boy coming home in the end) cannot be succinctly presented, and there are places in which Numerology, Freemasonry, the Jungian *anima* and other all-too-familiar properties of books like this bob up in what is, to me, a confusing way. But to read through the sonnets (whether in the Quarto order or as Mr Campbell proposes to reassort them) bearing steadily in mind this theory of their having indeed an "only begetter" is at least a critical exercise of a stimulating and unusual sort.

"WHAT IN FAITH make you from Wittgenstein, Horatio?" might be Hamlet's greeting to his friend in Zulfikar Ghose's updated Denmark in *Hamlet, Prufrock and Language*.[5] The last line of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is quoted early on: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." Mr Ghose himself has no difficulty in speaking, volubly and entertainingly—and also courageously, since his whole thesis is that verbal communication is extremely dangerous. "Once the realisation strikes one's mind that no language-proposition is ever going to represent a true perception of reality, then one is confronted by the ultimate failure of the human intellect." And this is what is worrying Hamlet—with the odd consequence, it seems, that "the collected works of Samuel Beckett can be said to take place" within his mind, and that Shakespeare's play about him "is the objective correlative of literature." The characters are variously estimated. Horatio

> "is over-impressed by certain types of expression and loses no opportunity to use them, especially among people who are intellectually his inferiors. It is an affectation common to young people who have recently come down from a university."

Polonius does better. He is

> "not so much a long-winded fool . . . as a mind which is torn between wanting to use a complex language in order to communicate precisely the complexity of ideas while being aware, at the same time, that to most other minds such seemingly convoluted formulae seem bizarre."

And the Clown must not be underestimated in this linguistically-obsessed Elsinore; he "could be a young student at Wittenburg showing off his recently acquired mastery over rhetoric." It is pleasant: thus to find Mr Ghose at one with that earlier critic who judged the character of Polonius to be useful, and that the grave-diggers themselves may be heard with applause. I must not give the impression that his little book is other than a very clever one. It is full of references to T. S. Eliot, Alain Robbe-Grillet, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, Patrick White and other persons of just repute. As a paper read to an extremely high-brow undergraduate literary society it could not be other than a rip-roaring success.

HAMLET IS DISCUSSED at length in *Shakespeare and the Story*,[6] but to different effect. Mr Ghose has assumed (as many critics do of the majority of the plays) that Shakespeare starts from an abstract idea (here the general inadequacy of linguistic communication) for which he then finds some sequence of illustrative actions. Joan Rees holds that the plays have stories at their core, and that we should not make "what is indisputably there, i.e. the action, subservient to a feature of which we have no independent knowledge—the idea." But what is the story Shakespeare tells in *Hamlet*? It may not be quite the story he set out to tell, since pretty regularly he got into trouble with his plots, and developed great address in switching their direction or emphasis when he saw difficulties looming ahead. Between the opening and the close of *Hamlet* he perhaps designed a mere concatenation of violent and sensational events to keep things going until time was up. This proving unappealing and difficult, he developed the story of a young man of a certain temperament upon whom certain exceptional circumstances enforce the shedding of an old life and the assuming of a new. For Miss Rees *Hamlet*, thus viewed, cannot be faulted; through all its diversities there is a commanding unity of design. With the earlier plays it is rather different; what we often discern in them is Shakespeare's imagination running away with him. It sometimes simply runs *too fast*, so that he is winding up his story, or even several stories, far too soon. Or it irresistibly transcends the bounds of the fable, so that one character gets out of scale, or tone, with others. Both these troubles are found in, for instance, *The Merchant of Venice*. But

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[5] *Hamlet, Prufrock and Language*. By ZULFIKAR GHOSE. Macmillan, £6.95.

[6] *Shakespeare and the Story: Aspects of Creation*. By JOAN REES. The Athlone Press, £8.95.

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Shakespeare remains entirely in command. Shylock is abruptly pushed into the wings for good, and all sorts of charming poetry and nonsense are brought in to restore the pitch of comedy and conclude the piece.

Johnson judged rather poorly of this aspect of Shakespeare's art too; the plays are so loosely formed and carelessly pursued, he said, that the dramatist "seems not always to comprehend his own design." And Mr F. W. Bateson, pondering the fact that Shakespeare almost always borrowed his plot, suggests that this was so because "he found human *action* of so little interest in itself." Miss Rees, although agreeing with Johnson to the extent of roundly declaring, "Shakespeare's management of his stories is sometimes mismanagement", insists throughout on the significance of action, of "the articulation of events and the handling of episodes in a narrative structure", and I think she would accept Matthew Arnold's contention that human action has always been the material of true poetry, and that tragedy, in particular, tends to turn morbid without it. Yet what chiefly fascinates her is Shakespeare's sheer skill in dodging his way through stories not always too happily chosen. "There is no one like Shakespeare", she writes, "for pulling chestnuts out of the fire with such verve and confidence that in the theatre, at any rate, we do not notice how near to being singed he is."

A more kinetic image might be in order here. A brilliant wing-threequarter, with the experience of a score of international matches behind him, ceaselessly thinking ahead, alert for just the dash that will transform near-disaster into opportunity, hither and thither dividing the swift mind and answering foot until he tumbles triumphantly on top of the ball at a point across the goal-line which has only at the last moment been revealed to him: this seems to me to be essentially Miss Rees's Shakespeare. He is a player in whom creative imagination is ceaselessly at work, and one has a sense that a great deal of high spirits attends his knowledge of having yet once again got away with high-risk manoeuvre.

THE SUBTITLE OF *Shakespeare's Magnanimity*[7] renders an effect of whimsy reinforced by the first chapter, a kind of burlesque *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* in which the speakers bear names like Mistress Mulligrub, Sir Affable Ponder, and Sottopassagio. What immediately follows is another discussion of *Hamlet*, and the publisher

[7] *Shakespeare's Magnanimity: Four Tragic Heroes, Their Friends and Families*. By WILBUR SANDERS and HOWARD JACOBSON. Chatto & Windus, £4.95.

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feels that we may be surprised to learn that "comic inspiration predominates" in the tragedy. But Howard Jacobson is not really being so sweeping as this. Where others have seen obvious comedy in Polonius and the clowns he sees a much more subtle comedy in Claudius, who is ludicrously ill at ease in the role he has to play, and much more at home with Gertrude amid "all the warmth and all the fussiness of a distinctly settled domesticity." When Mr Jacobson has delivered himself of this (and cast an affectionate glance at Mr Wopsle's *Hamlet* as described in *Great Expectations*) he turns to a vigorous and penetrating commentary on the play as a whole, in which Hamlet's ability to "breathe a spirit of comedy" is given no more than the just emphasis it requires.

Wilbur Sanders then takes over with an essay on *Macbeth* which follows the same pattern of being agreeably gamesome before settling down. The Thane of Cawdor is an atrocious criminal, a barbarian butcher, who has yet always been regarded as a classic tragic hero, and this is a puzzle that has to be resolved. The first point to make is that Scotland is a perfectly frightful place: sparsely peopled, barren, and with very nasty weather: thunder and lightning, fog and filthy air. "Dawn itself, in these latitudes, is a ghastly and comfortless prefiguring of the day's violence." Johnson disliked Scottish scenery very much, Mr Sanders says. (This is certainly true: "matter incapable of form or usefulness, dismissed by nature from her care and disinherited of her favours, left in its original elemental state, or quickened only with one sullen power of useless vegetation.") And then, unceasingly in this wretched country, there is, or was, "clan feud, massacre, conspiracy, and dynastic butchery." Amid such pervasive ferocity, a Macbeth is entirely in the picture.

I hope I don't travesty Mr Sanders. He is simply making the fairly familiar point that *Macbeth* is a play emphatically set in a barbaric past. Macbeth's morals are pervasive in his Scotland, and we should not be surprised that he is able to contemplate murdering Duncan. "We should be surprised with what horror his mind recoils from the thought. It makes him, at once, a man apart." The germ of Macbeth's tragic stature is here. He rises to "a relentless knowing of his deed"—and moreover his energies are of the order that the English are inclined to look north for when they suspect themselves of having turned a shade effete. The Scots gain this good mark in Mr Sanders's penultimate paragraph, but on the whole they fare ill throughout the essay, being people who find it "difficult to believe that any act is truly heinous", and habitually solve their political problems "by fixing heads on battlements."

The poet Cleveland believed that

Had **Cain** *been Scot God would have changed his doom:*

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Not forced him wander, but confined him home.

Mr Sanders is perhaps of the same opinion, and I judge it likely that a Jacobean audience would think about themselves and their northern neighbours in a manner vindicating what he is advancing as a significant element in the play. But neither he nor they would have any strong feelings about Volscians as such—and Mr Sanders's discussion of *Coriolanus* benefits from a strict concentration on dramatic character. This and Mr Jacobson's essay on *Antony and Cleopatra* are alike stimulating as being predominantly "character studies" of a traditional sort—to which, however, there has been lent a vigorous but not aggressively modish contemporary accent. Between them these collaborators have achieved an admirably provocative book.

ALL THESE WORKS have appeared within the last few months. But if we are prompted to suppose the Shakespeare industry a modern phenomenon there is a fifth volume of Brian Vickers's massive compilation to set us right.[8] It runs to 569 pages affording a select view of what was written about the plays during the nine years from 1765 to 1774. Nearly a third of the text, indeed, is provided by Johnson—the introduction to his edition being printed in full, together with a copious selection of his notes. The rest of the book, if a little thin on criticism of any very memorable quality, presents a great deal of significant material for the historian of literary taste. And Professor Vickers's learned and discriminating introduction is a model of its kind.

[8] *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage. Volume 5: 1765–1774.* Edited by BRIAN VICKERS. Routledge, £13.50.

Streets Ahead

Dickens & Victorian Literature—By BERNARD BERGONZI

ONCE, NOT SO LONG AGO, the adjective "Victorian" had generally unfavourable associations. They still exist, but applied to a limited and dwindling range of subjects: Victorian factories and schools, Victorian hypocrisy and morality (seen as much the same thing); these are still bad. On the other hand, many things once thought of as self-evidently undesirable and foolish have now, with a deep shift of sensibility, become respectable and even admirable, like Victorian political thought, Victorian painting, Victorian architecture.

In literature the change has been easy to trace. Victorian poetry was one of the things that the Modernists reacted against, and their reaction was codified in the criticism of I. A. Richards and F. R. Leavis, who saw in that poetry too much sound and too little sense, or shoddy thinking and emotional self-indulgence. That way of looking at it is still not extinct, but in general Victorian poetry is now thought very well of, and is a proper object of critical and scholarly attention.

So, too, is the Victorian novel, though once it was otherwise. For instance, in 1911 Ford Madox Ford wrote in *The Critical Attitude* "to the great bulk of educated criticism of today, George Eliot has become a writer unreadable in herself and negligible as a critical illustration." Now she is thought of as a supremely great writer. Leavis, in *The Great Tradition*, had a lot to do with establishing her present standing. Dickens was always a popular favourite, but for a long time was regarded as too popular by half, a basically unserious writer, not worth the prolonged attention of adult or sophisticated readers. In 1948 Leavis dismissed Dickens, apart from *Hard Times*, as a "great entertainer"; by 1970 he had reversed this judgment and come to regard Dickens as a great and serious artist. That opinion of Dickens is now common, though not quite universal.

Quite apart from the pressures of academic opportunism and expedience, in my experience options on Victorian fiction are popular with undergraduates, despite the length of the texts. Reading these novels involves one in a delicate balance of likeness and unlikeness, which can be intellectually challenging. Dickens's London, for instance, is still in some ways our London; many of the street-names are unchanged, many public buildings and their surroundings remain. And yet, in other ways, it is a totally different city. This is true, though less dramatically, of many other realistic and mimetic aspects of Victorian novels. The point is well made by Michael Irwin in his remarkably interesting and suggestive book, *Picturing*,[1] where he discusses the combination of familiarity and unfamiliarity in the situations of characters in these novels. The voices of these people, or their authors',

[1] *Picturing: Description and Illusion in the Nineteenth-Century Novel.* By MICHAEL IRWIN. Allen & Unwin, £8.50.

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seem to speak to us in a direct and intimate fashion, which is why the novels appear accessible and remain popular. As Mr Irwin puts it:

> In their dialogue and authorial comment the great Victorian novels are closer to us, more immediate in their language and manner, than any other literature produced before this century. Many of the observations of Mr Bennet, Harold Skimpole, Michael Henchard, Gwendolen Harleth or, for that matter, of Jane Austen or George Eliot could still be made, word for word, today. We need make no adjustment, it might seem, for convention or lapse of time. The familiar tones tend to make us forget that the voices are speaking in the past—in that foreign country where things are done differently. We are in danger of being beguiled into an anachronistic response.

We need to be reminded that the streets through which these people walked were crowded with horse-drawn vehicles, and that the drawing-rooms where they sat and talked were, by our standards, over-furnished and over-decorated. Mr Irwin's particular point is well taken, though I have found that students reading Victorian novels are generally aware of the alien and unfamiliar, at least in terms of convention and institution and their material embodiments.

WHEN READING THESE NOVELS, which are so located in history, and which contain so much historical circumstance, either presented directly or transformed into myth and symbol, we are likely to turn to historians to find out more about such things as trains and dust-heaps in Dickens or agriculture in Hardy or politics in Trollope. The desirability of interdisciplinary effort informs Laurence Lerner's *The Victorians*,[2] which is part of a series called "The Context of English Literature." Anyone interested in Victorian literature would certainly profit from reading it. A team of Sussex academics provides essays on the social, economic, political and intellectual history of Victorian England, followed by more particular studies of painting and illustration (with accompanying pictures); faith and doubt; and the role of women. This historical material is preceded by essays on the novel, by Geoffrey Hemstedt, and on poetry, by Laurence Lerner; with Professor Lerner concluding the book, under the heading "Literature and Society", with essays on *Dombey and Son* and *The Princess*.

The book is informative, well-written and sensibly arranged. But as with all such endeavours text and context remain at some distance from each other; there is an appreciable gap between background and foreground. I agree that students of Victorian literature should know something about Victorian history and society, and this book will provide such knowledge. But how far the acquisition of what it has to offer will affect their reading of particular Victorian literary texts is not a matter I would like to speculate about. Historical ignorance provokes one kind of misreading; the wrong kind of historical and contextual knowledge might provoke another kind. Professor Lerner shows himself well aware of this, at the end of his essay on *Dombey and Son*, when he remarks of Dickens:

> The animation of things is central to his imagination, and even fog (at the beginning of *Bleak House*) or sunlight (at the beginning of *Little Dorrit*) are the occasion of dazzling stylistic performances that give them a more independent life than many of the human characters. If we relate the novels to their social setting, we can see this as alienation. But novels are the product not only of social circumstances but also of a literary tradition and an individual sensibility: relating the prose to these we can see it as expressing something more like delight.

I applaud the critical pluralism. But some readers, particularly historians, may find it disconcerting to be told that, if reading novels in their social context is a good thing, reading them out of it might be an even better thing. The inter-relating of literary and historical texts is a more complex business than one might gather from most of Professor Lerner's collection, though Geoffrey Hemstedt in the opening essay throws out a pregnant remark about the way in which literature can affect our apprehension of history. The subject is, again, Dickens: "our own mythic sense of what Victorian England was like has been importantly shaped by his works, which themselves have been abstracted into myths."

DICKENS, INDEED, is inescapable. The fairly recent critical emphasis on his absolute greatness as a writer is surely right, even though the greatness retains problematical elements. But he is a mythic force as well as a man of letters, and the adjective "Dickensian" can instantly and potently evoke a sense of the past, a past which nostalgically contrasts with the present; or lives on it by the persistence of things and institutions. Like "Victorian", "Dickensian" can have a positive or a negative dimension, as we see if we compare a "Dickensian Christmas" with a "Dickensian workhouse." It is a good question how far Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, in their new biography,[3]

[2] *The Victorians*. Edited by LAURENCE LERNER. Methuen, £8; paper, £3.95.

[3] *Dickens: A Life*. By NORMAN and JEANNE MACKENZIE. Oxford University Press, £8.95.

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have given us a Dickensian Dickens. Twenty-five years ago he was the subject of Edgar Johnson's huge biography, which has recently been revised and reissued, and which remains a standard work. But the life of so central a figure as Dickens needs to be redone from time to time, to take account not only of fresh scholarship but of fresh possibilities of interpretation. The MacKenzies have made good use of the work of scholars such as Philip Collins and K. J. Fielding, and of the first four volumes of the Pilgrim edition of Dickens's letters. They are very professional biographers, and this book is well constructed, adequately but not excessively annotated, and irresistibly readable.

The jacket illustration reproduces Maclise's painting of 1839 showing Dickens as a young man of 27 already a national celebrity following the publication of *Boz* and *Pickwick*—with beardless, sensitive, faintly imperious features, and a studied elegance of attire. The MacKenzies emphasise the early-Victorian Dickens, a slightly younger contemporary of Disraeli and Bulwer-Lytton, who was dandiacal, theatrical, and much given to public displays of feeling. These were personal characteristics, no doubt, but reinforced and encouraged by the period in which Dickens came to maturity; he retained them when he became a great man of High Victorian England.

The MacKenzies' total picture is of a great artist who paid a very high cost in human terms for the popular and aesthetic triumphs of his art. Drawing on the accounts of his contemporaries, they present a Dickens whose emotions were always close to the surface, instantly capable of affection and rage, possessed of prodigious energy and a tormenting restlessness, and an extraordinary capacity for attending to detail. Many people loved and were warmed by him, but many others found him bullying and aggressive in his demeanour; the MacKenzies suggest that he was very ready to play the God-like novelist in real life: "he was a man of dominating temperament who was disposed to manipulate people in everyday life as if they were creatures of his imagination." Towards the end of his life Dickens found he could indulge his taste for the theatrical, and his need to manipulate the emotional responses of others, by the enormously popular public readings from his novels that he gave all over England. These performances were physically and nervously exhausting, but he still went on with them, making more and more demands on himself, until in the end his health gave way and he died at the age of 58.

The MacKenzies' Dickens is a Dionysiac and Faustian figure whose art finally destroys him; it is an art of performance as much as of calm creativity. They paint a convincing picture, though it is not always easy to relate to the author whose

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person emerges from the novels, and is not likely to appeal to the Dickens Fellowship. But we should by now, in the post-Freudian era, be ready to abandon the persisting Victorian sentimentality that great artists are necessarily "master spirits" or even particularly likeable people.

A MAJOR STRAND that runs through *Dickens: A Life* is Dickens's immense dependence on London both for material and for emotional stimulus. As a child, working in the dreaded blacking factory, he had often walked the streets of the city, and as an adult and a famous man he continued to do so, sometimes covering thirty miles at a stretch. In 1846, when he was staying in Switzerland and writing *Dombey and Son*, he wrote to John Forster complaining of the absence of streets and crowds:

> "I can't express how much I want these. It seems as if they supplied something to my brain, which it cannot bear, when busy, to lose . . . the toil and labour of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern, is IMMENSE!!"

Dickens's complex relationship with London is the subject of *Dickens and the City*,[4] an original study which combines biographical criticism with social history. F. S. Schwarzbach has a simple thesis for his starting point, to the effect that when Dickens's family left Kent and settled in London, and he, as a sensitive child, had to go to work in the blacking factory, the experience became a traumatic expulsion from Eden in Dickens's personal myth. While depending on London for substance and imaginative impetus, Dickens was long haunted by an impossible pastoral ideal of rural peace and seclusion. Mr Schwarzbach traces this idea quite convincingly through many of the novels, but he doesn't let it dominate him, and much of the interest of his book lies simply in seeing how Dickens dealt with London, as both reality and symbol, in his successive novels. Mr Schwarzbach describes *Martin Chuzzlewit* as importantly innovative:

> *Martin Chuzzlewit* marks a dramatic change in the quality of Dickens' urban observation, and his use of it in his fiction. In this novel, and in those that follow, the role of the city can no longer sufficiently be described simply as setting, a topographical entity in which characters and events are placed in a totally independent manner as they might be anywhere else, nor even as a motif with certain tonal or emotional qualities, which colours the action of the novel and regulates the response of the reader. In *Martin Chuzzlewit* Dickens uses London quite consciously as a model of the social organization of England.

Dickens and the City successfully exemplifies the difficult business of sensitively and relevantly bringing together literary and historical approaches, to which I referred in an earlier paragraph. Some of the observations may make us modify our responses to well-known passages in Dickens—like, for instance, the mud at the beginning of *Bleak House*, that omnipresent symbolic substance. Mr Schwarzbach offers a careful and informative paragraph about the probable constituents of mud in the streets of London in the middle of the century, and very nasty they were: "The mud must at times have been nothing less than liquid ordure."

LIKE MANY MODERN CRITICS Mr Schwarzbach emphasises the sombre side of Dickens's art. The problem remains of relating the darkness of vision to Dickens's humour and comic exuberance, to the Dickens who undoubtedly *was* a great popular entertainer. This dichotomy is the theme of P. J. M. Scott's *Reality and Comic Confidence in Charles Dickens*,[5] and is reflected in the opposed terms of its title. Mr Scott confines himself to a laboriously close reading of *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Our Mutual Friend*, uncovering what he calls a tension between the sense of a world infected by "dark powers" and "a narrative idiom which is extremely exhilarating in a comic fashion." He finds the tension creatively at work in the first two novels, but collapsed in *Our Mutual Friend*, which he regards as an unsatisfactory work. Mr Schwarzbach, on the other hand, thinks highly of it; he regards it as the novel in which Dickens finally exorcised his myth of lost childhood. Both these critics may be reading the novel in the light of their *parti pris*. Mr Scott's book touches on, or revolves round, a crucial question about Dickens. But it is impossible to praise or recommend it. The prose is so opaque, convoluted and self-regarding, so studded with parentheses and words in italics, that I found myself unable, for pages at a time, to understand what he was trying to say.

DICKENS IS, so to speak, a dominant absence in a new book on George Gissing by my colleague at Warwick, John Goode.[6] Gissing, says Mr Goode, is "a novelist whose major point of reference is Dickens." This does not mean that he was heavily influenced by Dickens, though the influence was certainly there; but he was pre-

[4] *Dickens and the City*. By F. S. SCHWARZBACH. Athlone Press, £10.50.

[5] *Reality and Comic Confidence in Charles Dickens*. By P. J. M. SCOTT. Macmillan Press, £8.95.

[6] *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction*. By JOHN GOODE. Vision Press, £5.95.

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occupied with Dickens, admired him profoundly if sometimes reluctantly, wrote some excellent criticism of him, and defined himself as a writer against Dickens, while always being conscious of the things that made him unlike Dickens. Because of his historical situation and own lesser talent he could never attain the embracing popular success of Dickens, as he bitterly realised.

Mr Goode's book is written with rigour and concentration, and reflects an evident affection for Gissing. At the same time, we are drawn into the haunted world of modern Marxist criticism, where literary texts are never quite what they seem to be and where everything is liable to be the result of ideology and mystification, controlled by the hidden puppet-masters of late capitalism. Still, one doesn't have to accept all that to see that Mr Goode is saying some penetrating things about the alienation and displacement, the "unclassment", of late 19th-century intellectuals, which provide a motive for much of Gissing's major fiction. Mr Goode is especially enlightening on Gissing's London, which was in some respects still Dickens's London, but which had become "zoned" into neighbourhoods, containing varieties of residences, and modes of production and service, so that the city itself acts as a model of capitalist society, which rather extends the point Mr Schwarzbach makes about *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Mr Goode applies the model to Gissing's own career as a metropolitan writer, in a way that illustrates his tough but suggestive manner:

> A teleological way of describing Gissing's career would be to say that he travels from Clerkenwell to Gunnersbury, moves across the social space of the city, from the ghetto to the lodging-house to the villa, and that as he moves in this direction, he increasingly locates the determinations of late capitalism in the "free" subjectivity.

THERE IS SOME EXCELLENT CRITICISM of Dickens and Gissing and other Victorian novelists in Michael Irwin's *Picturing*, which I mentioned at the beginning of this piece. He is concerned with the importance of physical description in 19th-century fiction, arguing that so-called "mere" description can contribute as much to the total impression a novel makes as the more conspicuous elements of character and narrative and theme. Mr Irwin refers in passing to Gombrich's *Art and Illusion*, and his treatment of literary material seems profitably indebted to Gombrich's study. His book is divided into several sections, covering Faces, Gestures, Clothes and Accoutrements, Rooms and Houses, Villages and Towns. Each section is prefaced by a small anthology of relevant quotations from a wide range of novels, which provide a specific basis for

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the generalising discussions that follow. Describing people and things and places, Victorian novelists tended to make use of established modes and conventions. Even the absence of much overt description, as is often the case in Jane Austen or George Eliot or Henry James, can tell us a lot about the kind of novel we are reading and the author's attitude to the material. As one might expect, Mr Irwin has plenty to say about Dickens, the richest of all fictional describers. He makes an important point in showing that fictional realism need not inevitably reflect the sombre, the depressed and the ultimately tragic. There is, too, such a thing as comic realism, which delights in the multifariousness of objects and the endless variety of life, supremely exemplified by Dickens. In method, I found Mr Irwin's book valuable in so far as it suggests ways of relating the traditional forms of discussing fiction, which focus on character and story, with the newer kinds of analysis which deal with a novel as a text or system of balanced and opposed elements:

> If the novel is seen in this light, not as a collection of stories, but as a system of contrasting modes of living, contrasting kinds of energy, then Dickens' interest in posture, gesture, habits of speech or dress must be acknowledged to be central to his purpose.

Mr Irwin's study is not only enlightening but useful; as well as showing us interesting things it teaches us to notice them for ourselves.

Romance, Research, Melodrama

American Literature—By HELEN MCNEIL

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE was by all accounts a pleasant man, a good writer, and a faithful husband, but he was a terrible coward, as he was the first to admit. It was a cowardice with good consequences. Whenever he set pen to paper, Hawthorne cravenly obscured his work so that his fellow Americans wouldn't have to face up to what he really meant. He was convinced they would reject him if he tried to "diffuse thought and emotion through the opaque substance of today", and besides such an effort was beyond his capacities. Instead, Hawthorne wrote what he called "romances", distanced symbolic narratives, "where the creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparision with the actual events of real lives." When Hawthorne wrote his masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter* in 1849, he felt "a better book than I shall ever write was there", unwritten because he was afraid to set his tale of rebellion and guilt in the present. When he described the failure of the utopian socialist community at Brook Farm, it came out as *The Blithedale Romance*, which Hawthorne conveniently attacked in his Preface as "a fancy-sketch", "theatre", "essentially a day-dream."

Radical evasiveness isn't a problem that 19th-century prose is meant to have, but then Hawthorne wasn't really writing in the 19th century. He wrote a mixture of Spenserian romance and a 20th-century modernism that assumes a problematic of both style and structure. The 19th century came in through Hawthorne's romantic mythologising, in which myth was a pretext for interpretation, critique, endless revision. (Robert D. Richardson, Jr. has given us, in his *Myth and Literature in the American Renaissance*,[1] an invaluable study of the mythology and literature familiar to 19th-century writers in America.) And, of course, the 19th century came in as fear, Hawthorne's justified paranoia about being honest to the philistines.

Hawthorne fancied that his dilemma was particularly American, a claim which Baudelaire or Flaubert might have been happy to dispute. Americans, according to Hawthorne, had no manners of imagination: either something was real and important, or it was unreal and unimportant. In Europe, he argued, the writer didn't have to retreat to a safe distance from reality. Art enjoyed "a certain conventional privilege" according to which it was "not put exactly side by side with nature." Fictional convention didn't have to coincide with the materialism of its subject. Hawthorne was interested in "propriety", not representation, since for him the real was whatever the writer and his audience agreed it to be in the contract between them. Without a contractual convention, everything was unreal, a "soap-bubble", so the writer might as well have his fun.

For American writers, the alternative to Hawthorne's evasive romance was never realism. When realism came towards the end of the 19th century it had to be hacked out of a glacial tradi-

[1] *Myth and Literature in the American Renaissance.* By ROBERT D. RICHARDSON, Jr. Indiana University Press. $15.00, £9.35.

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tion of genteelism that romance had not melted. The American "propriety" was to keep a middle tone, a cousinly complicity with the audience, and to avoid history. It ran from Washington Irving through William Dean Howells and on past its supposed death at the hands of George Santayana.

"ROMANCE" HAS STUCK as the word to describe the way that American novels differ from the English tradition,[2] but I find that romance usually works with two other forms, research and melodrama, to make up what is characteristic about most American prose, and much American poetry as well. Research is an authorial habit of mind, romance is a genre, and melodrama is an effect on an audience, though it can also be a genre. Formally these qualities don't express alternatives; where one appears, another is probably present.

Research is the habit of looking up reality from a safely scholarly distance. Hawthorne, Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Dreiser, Faulkner, Hart Crane, and Thomas Pynchon have all been researchers, and in all except Dreiser accumulation of facts has the ironic effect of making one less and less eager to believe in their empirical reality. Information and the real don't coincide in the researched romance. Hawthorne and Pynchon make fun of their pedantic quests for information—Hawthorne as the shiftless bureaucrat rummaging through the Custom House and finding a scarlet letter, Pynchon parodying the fabricator as Stencil who wants to research the letter *V*, and turning everyone into a "grad student" in *The Crying of Lot 49*. Melville uses facts as masks:

> So ignorant are most landsmen of some of the plainest, the most palpable wonders of this world, that without some hints touching the plain facts, historical and otherwise, of the fishery, they might scout at Moby-Dick as a monstrous fable, or still worse and more detestable, a hideous and intolerable allegory.

Melville's sardonically expressed fear means he knew perfectly well that he had written a "monstrous fable", enlarging romance until it verged on epic—and Edward H. Rosenberry has dealt with *Moby-Dick* as "epic romance" in his recent study, *Melville*.[3]

Melodrama, the literature of effect, aims to get more emotive results than it deserves to, and its aura of self-indulgence makes it the enemy of the genteel. This alone would make it of special importance for American literature. Romance,

[2] The term "romance" was revived by Richard Chase in his influential study *The American Novel and its Tradition* (1957).

[3] *Melville*. By EDWARD H. ROSENBERRY. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £6.25.

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Decadence and the Eighteen-Nineties

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Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 17

The eighteen-nineties have long been thought a decisive decade, yet they have been obscured by a series of partial interpretations extending over the past sixty years. Perhaps the most significant of these was the idea of the 'tragic generation' proposed by Pound, and followed by Eliot and Virginia Woolf: in the words of Renato Poggioli, 'By treating aestheticism and decadence as the last exotic pendants of a hopelessly frumpish Victorianism, modernists made modernism newer . . .'
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however, is the most completely defined of these terms I have been using, because Hawthorne defined it by his practice. His motives bear looking into. Like the curses, birthmarks, emblems and mysteries of origin that figure so powerfully in his own tales, Hawthorne left an ambiguous mark on other American writers. He invented an aspect of modernism 60 years before time but he also bequeathed a weakness. Writers who distance themselves from society are likely not to be heard. Writers who work in self-confessed "light" genres can be taken lightly: Robert Louis Stevenson, Graham Greene, John Le Carré. How many masterpieces in watercolour do you know?

In his gently masochistic Prefaces Hawthorne toys with being so clever as to outwit himself, because if his readers believe his built-in dismissals they can hardly also believe the symbolic aggressions in his narratives. As always, though, Hawthorne set it up so that what he suffered was not his fault. America made him do it.

Hawthorne's unspecific pain is too visible a literary wound to be anything but self-inflicted, unless one assumes charitably that it came from one of the more fortunate falls from American Adamhood. Emily Dickinson described the soul as a wallflower who "selects her own society", rejecting others before they get a chance to reject her. Hawthorne used his literary cowardice in a similar fashion to protect himself and his audience from an ugly confrontation which he genuinely thought he might lose. It would have been too terrible to take the way of imaginative challenge. Hawthorne could have used his new literary genre as a means of saying "No! in thunder", which in fact was what his friend Herman Melville thought Hawthorne had done. When Melville read *The Scarlet Letter* it gave him the courage to change his partly written *Moby-Dick* from a researched travelogue to a demonic (but still well-researched) romance. Hawthorne protested that Melville had misread him, but Melville had recognised the radical potential in even *seeing* genre as ideological. Also he read the themes of creativity and rebellion.

HAWTHORNE'S COWARDICE was a strategy. In literature, paranoia is a principle of economy (I suspect it may be in psychology too). By sampling what he is afraid of, checking and shifting the edge where fear begins, the writer discovers where he ends and the enemy audience or society begins. Even better, paranoia permits the writer to discover this borderline[4] without ever having to say aloud what, or where, he is (uttering it aloud would reveal it to the enemy). Thematically and formally the romance paranoid concentrates on limits, ambiguities, investigations, flights which are also quests, and botched apocalypses. The formula is surprisingly successful, at least within the work. As princes and dictators well know, find an external enemy and your own confused populace will rally to your side. In the 19th century literary paranoia was one of the ways forward from romantic solipsism, the other American way being transcendental idealism. The romance's characteristic vacillations and revisions also continue the Romantic practice of mythological critiques long after mythic narratives had to be displaced in the direction of social realities.

To have it work, the paranoid has to be at home with his dread. Paranoia is a neurosis whose perceptions have to be expressed. After all, paranoia is about recognition. When it is present but suppressed, as in Ernest Hemingway, the work is crippled. Hemingway's novels pulsate with fear, but fear as externalised fetish, terror as a test to be passed. Sexual fear is acted out as revenge on the woman. At the end of *A Farewell to Arms*, self-effacing Catherine Barkley must die so that neither Hemingway nor his hero Frederic Henry has to face up to the fear of spending an entire life married to such a human sponge. Norman Mailer, on the other hand, melodramatically plays out dangerous situations. His hipster hero places himself in danger so he can use the test of fear to find himself: "magic, dread, and the perception of death were the roots of motivation", says Stephen Rojack in *An American Dream*, discussed by Robert Ehrlich in *Norman Mailer: The Radical as Hipster*.[5]

In literary paranoia, whatever the writer *isn't* afraid of becomes his: his imagination, his fictive world. Curiously few American writers express doubts about their imaginative capacity. It is only at the point of contact with audience that fears multiply. Seen positively, romance paranoia is a way of keeping the maximum creative space undefined. Literary reception is not the fault of the writer, whose moral and social stances should be unattackable unless he attacks them himself. The status of myths, characters, society, even the status of objects are all ambiguous. Topical boundaries disappear, making it possible, for example, to express psychology and metaphysics through the same set of actions.

In *The Scarlet Letter* Hester Prynne spends her life refusing to subject her unanalysed energies to the meaning symbolised by the red A she is forced to wear. Eventually A for adulteress becomes A for whatever Hester is. Character is enriched as it approaches allegory, in defiance of the way novels

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[4] *The Visionary Poetics of Allen Ginsberg*. By PAUL PORTUGÉS. Ross-Erikson Publishers, $11.95, paper $4.95. In an otherwise rambling discussion, Paul Portugés prints for the first time some revealing interviews in which Ginsberg relates drug paranoia to his poetic themes.

[5] *Norman Mailer: The Radical as Hipster*. By ROBERT EHRLICH. Scarecrow Press, £7.50.

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are supposed to work. Finally the scarlet letter comes to mean the symbolising process itself. In *Moby-Dick* Captain Ahab's terror and his desire have the same (ambiguous) narrative manifestations: flight from the white whale, and the quest after it. Are Ahab's sufferings accidents of nature or are they the evidence of a cruel design? "All visible objects, man, are but pasteboard masks", he cries. Motivation is ambiguous: "Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm?" All that is clear is Ahab's melodramatically expressed hatred for the enigma: ". . . be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principle, I will wreak that hate upon him."

WHEN THE AMERICAN WRITER sets himself against what Hawthorne slyly called the "opaque" present, can he depict it with any impact? I think the answer is yes she can, and she did, by using melodrama. Harriet Beecher Stowe's researched melodrama *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) was one of the rare books that changed history, galvanising public opinion against the moral outrages of slavery. Partly because of the enormous political impact of her book, partly because of her melodramatic sensationalism, Stowe's research was challenged. But she had anticipated this, and the next year she published *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, documenting the horrors described so luridly in her fiction.

Uncle Tom's Cabin is an emotionally "hot" book, flying from comedy to anguish with a speed that makes Dickens look sluggish. Romance murmurs from a distance, but melodrama has a compact with its audience, promising emotional release in a non-realistic context. Even in American literature, where it is arguably a major tradition, melodrama is a "low" form. Melodrama's psychological model of exceeding limits makes it seem morally bad, while its formulaic emotionalism makes it a potential instrument of political exploitation, substituting expression for analysis and using up emotion. The negative view of melodrama interestingly unites marxists and conservatives.

In 19th-century America, however, Stowe confidently used melodrama as an instrument for moral awakening. Her success may be due partly to the continuing popularity of sentimental fiction like Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* and its imitators, but *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'s power to compete with amoral melodrama in, say, Edgar Allan Poe points to a deeper value, the influence of 18th-century views of benevolence through instinctive action (American Wordsworthianism). Emotions are a direct route to morality, and melodrama can set the reader on that road.

The death of Stowe's Little Eva and the death of Dickens's Little Nell have more than a passing resemblance. In both Stowe and Dickens

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characters drop to their knees, wring their hands, die pathetically, and have their sufferings interrupted by spliced-in humorous incidents. What is more, recent criticism of 19th-century English fiction has tended to stress such anti-realistic elements. Dickens and *Wuthering Heights* have been foregrounded, while *Middlemarch* has receded. Yet researched melodrama and realism, even mythic or prophetic realism, are different genres in different national cultures. Melodramatic incidents like the collapse of Mrs Clenham's house in *Little Dorrit* or the self-immolation of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations* are placed in a realistic context, however perfunctory. Workmen dig out Rigaud's body from the rubble. Pip knows first aid and wraps up Miss Havisham in a blanket.

However improbable they are, these scenes are defined as fitting, appropriate, part of the "propriety" of realism recognised by Hawthorne. In melodrama, researched or not, the collapse of the House of Usher and the deaths of Madeline and Roderick Usher, or Simon Legree's whipping of Uncle Tom are pushed over into appearing unique and unbearably horrific. Their narrative aptness as climax or turning point is if anything suppressed. In Poe, of course, an amoral suffering is exercised on victims who are also agents; in Stowe the moral point is made through exaggeration by having the suffering inflicted by one human being upon another.

When history isn't available as an adjunct to a sense of present reality, a researched melodrama is practically the only way that a writer can deal with his society. This is why melodrama has dominated American southern literature. (I use the term "melodrama" rather than the usual "gothic" because the key lies with sensational effect rather than with gothic scenery—often missing—or the psychology of horror.) William Faulkner, Truman Capote and William Styron use research; Carson McCullers and Tennessee Williams don't.

WHEN FAULKNER BEGAN to write fiction in the mid-1920s, he was faced with a Southern literature whose romantic mythologies had been culpable agents of delusion for over a century. From the sub-Sir Walter Scott romances of the antebellum period through the cosy racialist folklore of Joel Chandler Harris, with only brief dips into reality by Kate Chopin and Ellen Glasgow, Southern literature had a contract to gloss over the evils of slavery and a tottering semi-feudal agrarianism. It was distant from the real, but it never showed the vivifying paranoia of northern writers. Faulkner's first impulse was to get out. He expatriated himself from Oxford, Mississippi, to New Haven, Canada, Paris, then back through New Orleans to Mississippi. In *Sartoris* he tried a conventional Southern historical novel, romanticising a Civil War general. In *The Sound and The Fury* he broke through to melodramatic myth. Cleanth Brooks argues that Faulkner used myth to recover history, since in the South so much history had become myth,[6] but an equally important aim was to recover myth by myth.

Faulkner's construction of a mythic time and place in Yoknapatawpha County was all his own work, since Southern history in the 1920s consisted of biographies and legislative and political chronicles. He had to find the social and economic history as well as drive out old myths. Why then did he replace the old myths with new ones? Myth seems closer to a truth of emotion, and in Faulkner melodrama is a device for extracting terrible truths. In *Absalom, Absalom,* Rosa Coldfield sits writing her genteel history of a family of mythic monsters who murdered, raped, committed incest, and pillaged the land. In *The Sound and the Fury* the lily-white Southern Belle has been "revised", in the best American romance tradition into the ambiguously defiled Caddy Compson. Caddy is the central symbolic figure of the novel but she appears only reflected through the eyes of the four narrators, mythicised by distance. Faulkner saw her as the motive for the entire book, which began with the image of Caddy muddying her drawers and then went on to make her, among other contradictions, an emblem of Christian love and sacrifice.

ROMANCE, RESEARCH, and melodrama may well go on forever cropping up in American literature, but I feel more justified in arguing for them than I might be otherwise because all three define the work of Thomas Pynchon. In Pynchon even physical description works like research, throwing doubt on the reality it purports to detail. In *Gravity's Rainbow* the hero Slothrop is described according to the pile of objects on his desk, but this clutter bears no causal relation to the way he behaves: it's simply more information. While reading the novel the reader learns about the develop-

[6] *William Faulkner; Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond.* By CLEANTH BROOKS. Yale University Press, $17.50, £12.60.

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ment of the V-2 rocket and the way the Allies advanced across Germany in 1945, as well as some less historically enlightening information about how marijuana was grown on the rooftops of war-time London. The novel consists of little bursts of information and action scattered on a huge canvas, rather like the structure of Robert Musil's *The Man without Qualities*. Every three- or four-page burst *looks* real, but the sum of them is fabulous. Many actions are energetic but entropy sets in. Ambiguity is asserted to have been reduced to the space between the zero and the one, the off-on of the computer, but this proves to be enough space for all the hundred or so characters to get lost in. Over *Gravity's Rainbow*'s more than 750 pages the researched details feed the myths, decorate them, and finally are absorbed back into them the way the German youth Gottfried is fitted at the conclusion into the womb-tomb of the V-2. Pynchon thematises his romance form; research method takes off into the irrational of Tarot, metaphysics, eroticism and, subjected to re-entry, turns into ambiguous myth.

Throughout, Pynchon's guiding emotion is paranoia.[7] As in Melville every action becomes dangerous in proportion to its potential for infinite meaning. In *The Crying of Lot 49* Oedipa Maas wanders across California in her quest for, and flight from, the mysterious Tristero. A female Ahab, appropriately untyrannical, she lives life on a borderline between accident and malignity, with evil agencies always seeming the more satisfying fruit of her research. She investigates the dead world of philatelic history and digs into manuscripts of a Jacobean tragedy, *The Courier's Tragedy*. She will never know whether the novel's conclusion is the manifestation of a pull towards an ordered, if demonic, apocalypse, or if fear is just Oedipa's little problem: "either Oedipa in the orbiting ecstasy of a true paranoia, or a real Tristero." It may be anything.

As Wallace Stevens said of the real in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven":

It is not in the premise that reality
Is a solid. It may be a shade that traverses
A dust, a force that traverses a shade.

[7] *Pynchon: Creative Paranoia in "Gravity's Rainbow."* By MARK RICHARD SIEGEL. Kennikat Press (National University Publications), $11.00, £9.35.

A Vanished Voice

On Poetic Artifice—By G. S. FRASER

ONE TRADITIONAL historical way of looking at English poetry has to do with its diction. There is a movement from poetry which calls attention to the fact that it is poetry, that its diction is not that of prose, that it seeks to attract the reader's attention by device (since there are many devices and few topics) like the poetry of what C. S. Lewis called the Golden Style of the later Elizabethan age. The style is ornate and can sometimes be described as aureate. However, this Golden Style, typical of the speaking voice, is often the companion in time of poetry, like Thomas Campion's, written for music, written to be set and sung. This is not aureate but notable for its clarity of line, graceful simplicity of diction, and suggestion in its rhythm (a complex notion, notes Dr Forrest-Thomson in *Poetic Artifice*,[1] involving, for instance, syntax as much as metre and connected with a kind of internal vocal and consonantal patterning which is a focus of one's awareness of the shape of a poem, though it can be divorced from concern with the semantic) of the appropriate pauses and stresses of a musical setting. Such poetry is not frightened of being poetry, and appearing such.

It is often followed by a poetry like Ben Jonson's in which the devices are equally skilful but in which the poet is creating a mimesis of a plain man talking (often with what seems unpoetic insistence on everyday small matters) in tones of common sense. Jonson will write a very effective invitation to supper with a description of the menu and the reading or the music that will follow supper, but never wrote, outside of plays, what could properly be called a love poem. Yet though, as in his great poem on Penshurst, Jonson gives us a kind of information (for instance, about the ideal and practice of "old English hospitality"), we read him not for the information that we could extend beyond the poem, as a footnote to social history, but because his skill in his art enables him to absorb the details taken from the life into the poem in itself, whose structure and total form very much transcend its occasion.

[1] *Poetic Artifice: A Theory of Twentieth Century Poetry*. By VERONICA FORREST-THOMSON. Manchester University Press, £9.95.

THE TRANSCENDING ELEMENT, we could agree with Dr Veronica Forrest-Thomson, in what alas

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will be her final prose book, is "poetic artifice." It is a combative book and one writes about it sadly aware that this brilliant young woman is no longer here to take up and crush one's more obvious logical blunders and grossnesses of taste.

The one heroic figure she finds among English Renaissance poets is Donne, and strangely, though one of her objects is to weaken our obsession with semantics, one reason is her admiration for Donne's ability to make poetic order out of what seemed to him intellectual chaos in the "Anniversaries." This brilliant book seems to me, in fact, to be partly a duel between two aspects of its author, the mercilessly critical intellectual theorist and the poet and person for whom the poetic shaping of sound-sense was a sensual pleasure. She attacks poets, or rather critics of poets, whose central attention is to meaning (like Empson on sonnet 94) but a poet like Wallace Stevens, for whom meaning often seems a pretext for elegant verbalisation, bores her. However cunningly Stevens disguises his meanings as a mere prop they are too facile and second-hand. The internal structure which is what first draws one's attention to *The Waste Land* or *Four Quartets* leads on to admiration for the poetic mind in command of the whole structure.

Her favourite poets are torn apart like herself and I imagine that like Arnold she would have dismissed my decorative minor Elizabethans and Ben Jonson in grumpy reaction to them as of merely "historical" interest. The intellectual in her demanded a poet who is making poetry out of tension, and the poet (two of her poems which she cites here show what great though unfulfilled promise was there) demanded the sometimes impenetrable but rationally irrational skill of surprise.

ONE PART OF HER CALLED OUT for continuity and the other for the shock of the discontinuous (which she found, especially, in the "disconnected image-complex" of Eliot's quatrain poems). What she says about these, particularly about "Whispers of Immortality", indicates both her skill and her vulnerability. This is the poem which begins, "Webster was much possessed by death" and goes on to describe Donne as another whose world was a world of sense and whose skeletal lust could not be satisfied with any "contact possible to bone." There is then a comic description of an accessible woman called Grishkin, who is very accessible, clearly, but combines the cat-like quality which attracted Eliot the poet with the intense female cat-like smell ("And female smells in shuttered rooms") which other references in the poems (including the draft version of *The Waste Land*) make it clear disgusted the "I"

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of the poems. The puzzling quatrain (the only puzzling quatrain, I think) is the last:

> *And even the Abstract Entities*
> *Circumnambulate her charm;*
> *But our lot crawls between dry ribs*
> *To keep our metaphysics warm.*

Miss Forrest-Thomson is rightly puzzled by why Love, Beauty, Courtesy and the other Abstract Entities which no doubt attend Grishkin, in a Petrarchan way, should not satisfy the speaker and his set—which is what she interprets "our lot" as meaning—and why Abstract Entities like Beauty, perhaps, attending Grishkin as Grishkin's handmaiden, should not keep the speaker's (certainly very queer) "lot" as warm as the space between dead dry ribs. It does then occur to her that "our lot" can also mean our doom but its meaning, that way, is wider than that: to quote Robert Frost, on gum-gatherers, "I said, but yours is a happy lot. . . ."

Her point about these quatrain poems is that only the regular metre gives the poems any unity, and that there is no glue as it were to stick the disconnected image-complexes together. But with the correct use of "lot", this seems to me a very coherent poem. I wonder how bad, as a "naturalisation" (or translation into a possible prose sense), Dr Forrest-Thomson would have considered what follows:

> There are poets who seem more lustfully obsessed with death than life. It is true that there are accessible girls like Grishkin, accessible if absurd, and if this were the age of the *dolce stil novo* one could put her at the centre of a system of ideal love (though it would be a difficulty that her smell disgusts me). My fate is to find something to warm up my metaphysics in images connected with death and decay, really disgusting images really, rather than images of sexual love which I find myself mocking, not idealising.

The "our" in "our lot" is, of course, the royal we and asserts a modest claim by the speaker of the poem to rank with Webster and Donne.

One would be left agreeing with Dr Forrest-Thomson that there is a kind of flippancy in this and the other quatrain poems and even that elsewhere, if not here—in "A Cooking Egg" for instance—the quatrains, like playing-cards, slide smoothly past each other with only a pretence, hardly intended to be taken seriously by the reader, of connected meaning. One could agree also that a subtle blending of the discontinuous and continuous is the secret Eliot has at last discovered in *The Waste Land*. It is subtle to point out that in the first section of *The Waste Land* not only does the translation from Dante transform the crowd flowing over London Bridge but the crowd itself transforms the translation from being a mere

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AGAIN, OF ALL THE many statements that have been made about "In a Station of the Metro" (a title which is in a sense part of the poem) nobody has been more succinct than Miss Forrest-Thomson.

> Of course, "Metro" uses the level of meaning to lead out into the external world—into a station of the metro and into the poet's reaction to that world—but its technique then leads us back into the poet's thematic synthesis.

Pound was too good a poet, in fact, Miss Forrest-Thomson rightly insists, "to fall into the trap of concrete poetry." When he says that "the point of Imagism is that it does not use images as *ornaments*. The image is itself the speech. The image is the word beyond formulated language", he is, of course, Miss Forrest-Thomson sees, bluffing: "There is no word beyond formulated language, and Pound the poet knew it even at his most rabidly Imagist."

Her analysis of the poem, scansion, questioning of the reason for a semi-colon (and not the more obvious dash or colon, after the first line), nearness to being a simile without being one (it is for the reader not the poet to make the rational connection between the two parallel lines), is the most delicate I have seen.

I wish only that she had said something about the importance of the non-Imagist word which sets the poem off: "apparition" in the first line. Neither "ghost" nor "vision" would act as a substitute. The apparition, the sudden and surprising *appearing*, is what old-fashioned grammarians would call an abstract word, a word for what these faces do: and also, while it is important that the other words should be stripped clean of associations, the phantasmal or magical associations of "apparition" help. But I am not criticising a masterly analysis, merely continuing an imaginary conversation to which this book (the most exciting new book on poetics for ten or twenty years perhaps) everywhere excites us.

THE TREATMENT of Pound is largely offered to Empson, evidence that at least in "In a Station of the Metro" has invitations in its empirical method as rational as the discursive, or "argufying", method which Sir William in theory prefers. Miss Forrest-Thomson did not think Empson a great poet like Donne (he was not aware enough of the importance of non-semantic effects, of sound or

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syntax or both) but a poet worthy of detailed and respectful attention.

She deals with him brilliantly but in one of his later poems, "Manchouli", she seemed to me (a lack of his own melancholy and experience?) to miss his tone. I think she never appreciated the plain and relaxed style in verse. Here she says after paying tribute to Empson's assurance: "Why Empson should have chosen verse to tell us about his lucubrations is not clear; they would seem to go equally well into prose, but no doubt we find it normal for a poet to address us through a poem. . . ." She quotes:

I find it normal, passing these great frontiers,
That you scan the crowds in rags eagerly each side
With awe; that the nations seem real; that their ambitions
Having achieved such variety within one type, seem sane;
I find it normal;
So too to extract false comfort from that word.

Miss Forrest-Thomson images Empson soothing down an imaginary Gwendolen, who is passing the frontiers with him. But the "you" in line two of course means "one" ("one scans") and the question is not, as Miss Forrest-Thomson seems to think, whether Empson is right to find the situation normal (any student of Far Eastern history would) but whether there is ever any real comfort to be got from awareness of any distressing situation's (real not false) normality. It is what an experienced man would expect, and this is interesting, but thinking about its being what one would expect is a dishonest way of cheering oneself up. Perhaps the excitement of Empson's gift of phlegmatic understatement (almost boring himself) was something with which Miss Forrest-Thomson's more taut and tense temperament could not gear. Her criticism of his early poems is deeper and more convincing.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT book but the containing theory is in a sense sketched merely and "God is in the details." Those who had the privilege of Miss Forrest-Thomson's acquaintance will appreciate, and smile at, the ruthlessness of what she feels the wrong sort of irrationalism (or disguised platitudinousness) in Ted Hughes and David Gascoyne. She never pulled her punches, and her brief and bored treatment of Wallace Stevens should make a great many critics think again; perhaps I was right after all in never finding Stevens so exciting as Eliot. Auden surprisingly gets a kind of left-hand salvation by reminding her in his subtler devices of John Ashbery. It was a privilege to have her remarks on two poems of her

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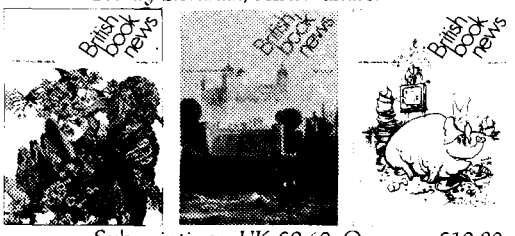

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own. She left me quite bewildered by J. H. Prynne and Andrew Crozier but feeling the fault was probably a stupid insensibility to an inward quality of shaping that transcends ordinary sense.

Most of all in her spry, witty, sometimes cruel prose—though there was a syntactical point, the final "I don't know", which she ought not to have missed in consigning Mr Bleaney to undeserved oblivion, and there is always a touch of Rupert, never coming but to conquer or to fall—I heard again a voice I had been privileged to hear occasionally in her period in Leicester, as an honorary scholar, in the early 1970s. All her fierce, eager, uncompromising youth is in this book which anybody willing to think hard will treasure; she is much more exciting even when one thinks her wrong than duller, safer critics when one thinks them right. She will find many disciples. But, alas, how wonderful would have been her own mature critical voice!

Parable for the hard shoulder

I rode Nonsense hard—rode him all day
till his breath came short and we had to stay
overnight at a motel near the motorway
where lovers equipped with all the refinements
for modern living sped to their assignments
on twin carbs that did fifteen to the gallon.
And there, after we had both fallen
asleep, I was visited in my sweven
by Dame Philosophy in metal studs
and motorbike leathers quite at odds
with the image of her I had drawn from Boethius.

She spoke of Hamlet and of Prometheus,
unhelmeted travellers both, who in their prisons
had amply repented themselves of wrong decisions
to go it alone and rock the status quo
—what Fortune dealt to fools stern Time would show.
I mentioned truth, courage, heroic defiance,
but the lady dismissed these as the contrivance
of writers who could not learn by experience,
arguing that for humans it was better to be human
than live in Rome and not do like a Roman.

Then coming close she brushed aside my qualms,
took off her clothes, and halsed me in her arms
with moistened lips. All through that echoing dark
her generous nakedness made love its mark.

Waking, I noticed how the morning forced
itself through the bleak window, where exhaust
fumes rose and fell in a blue haze.

How else after such a night should days
be spent than in endeavour to conform?
From the motel I bought a uniform
nylon suit, lightweight, with go-faster flashes,
flogged Nonsense to the knacker's yard for ashes
or fertiliser, unhitched my rising star,
and drove off up the motorway in a fast car.

John Gohorry

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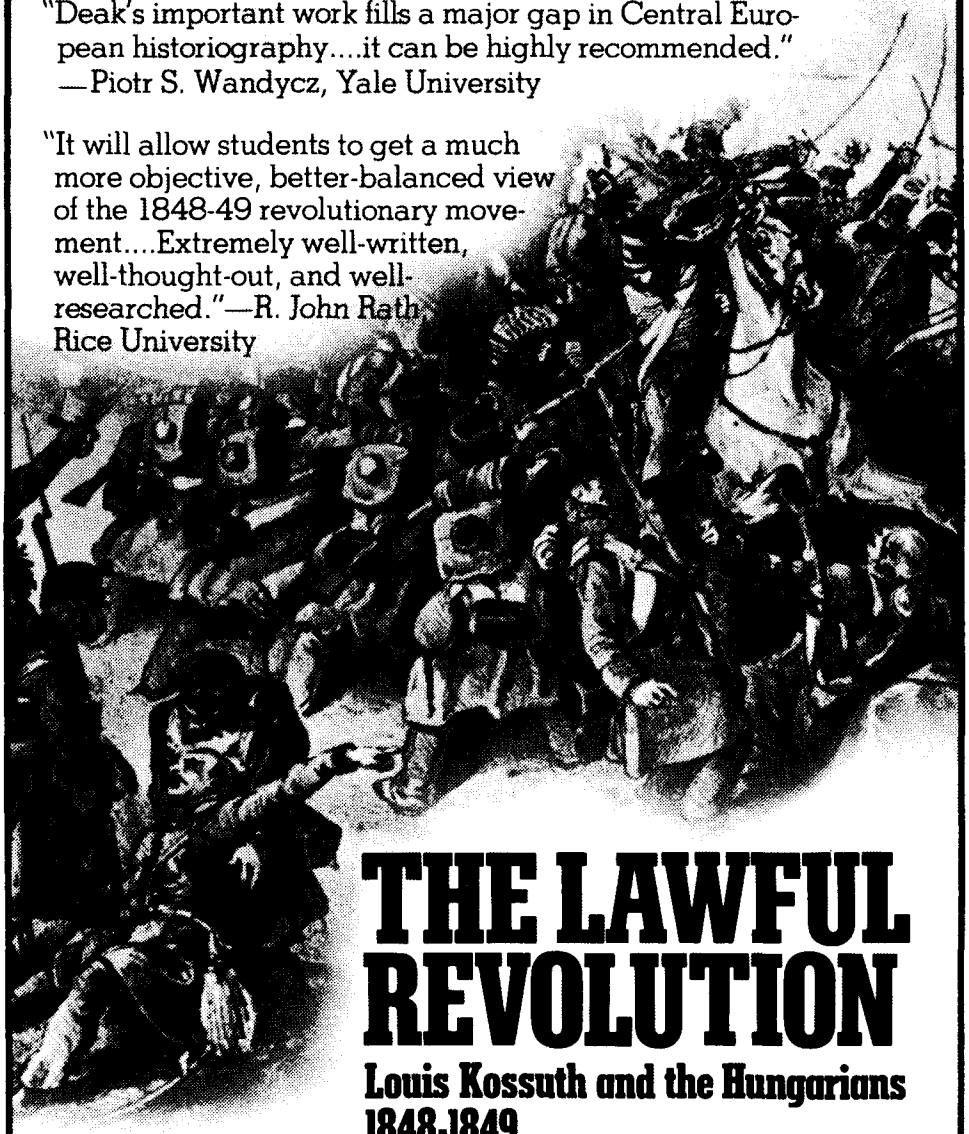

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DISCUSSION

Church Trends & Fashionable Theologians

By Gerald Priestland

NO WONDER journalists are going on strike: academics are taking the bread out of their mouths by publishing great chunks of polemical journalism disguised as Reith Lectures and essays for ENCOUNTER. And, as is the fashion in journalism, the pendulum has swung from trendy left to trendy right. Peter Simple has begotten Edward Norman and Edward Norman has begotten David Martin. The band-waggon is rolling, and media-minded academics are advised to book their seats while they are still available.

Professor Martin's thesis ("Revs & Revolutions", ENCOUNTER, January) is sadly lacking in supporting facts and figures, even for a piece of sociology. But let us try to summarise what he is getting at. He tells us that a Left-Liberal clerical élite, although unrepresentative of the faithful as a whole, has taken charge of the church and bodies like the BCC and World Council of Churches. From these commanding heights it is undermining our traditional loyalties and pieties, denigrating capitalism and democracy, and setting forth into the secular world riding on the tiger of Marxism. The Left-Liberal clergy, says Professor Martin, anxious to escape the stigma of being establishment figures, will espouse almost any anti-establishment cause or fashion in order to get with the political future. But alas, they haven't really thought out for themselves what kind of promised land they are riding to, or what price they will ultimately have to pay for entry.

To beguile you into accepting this point of view there are some swinging phrases like "the higher Buddyhood" and "the middle-class spontaneity cult" and some press cuttings from Dr Norman and *The Daily Telegraph*. I couldn't help smiling over the passage from Peter Simple about the mythical Dr Spaceley-Trellis waving a sub-machine-gun from the pulpit. It reminded me of the days, earlier this century, when a field-gun was actually dragged before the altar of St Paul's and bemedalled preachers harangued public-school chapels about the bestial mentality of the Hun. Which is to say, again, that the pendulum has swung.

SO IT SEEMS TO ME that Professor Martin, like Dr Norman, is guilty of a certain naivety (surely not disingenuousness) in conveying the impression that up to now the church has been a treasury of unworldly spirituality, unaffected by temporal influences. Given the annexation of the faith by a professional priesthood, given the ritualisation of worship, and the marriage of Church and State under Constantine, the miracle is that any of the power of the original Gospel has survived at all. Perhaps there is no way of proving that it has, although to be a Christian is to be convinced of it. What has certainly survived is the church itself; and I submit that it has done so and will continue to do so by constantly attaching itself to the social and political trends of the day, trying to identify Christian affinities in them. In short, organised religion has always been an expression of what society is, rather than a magic formula for transforming it into what it should be.

This is not to imply that we should approve uncritically of everything the with-it church does. I happen to be a pacifist, and for me Christ is above all the Christ of Nonviolence. I find it as incomprehensible that a Christian should lead a guerrilla movement as that a Pope should bless a Crusade. I also share Professor Martin's shuddering distaste for the Grope-in Kiss of Peace. I can, however, understand why a Bishop should march in an anti-Fascist demo or a minister run a Whole Food Cooperative and believe sincerely that he is following the will of the Holy Spirit *for him*. The great danger of the Norman-Martin attitude is that, whether or not they intend to, it spreads the message that the only good Christians are either conservatives or hermits, and that Left-Liberal activities should be abandoned to non-Christians. Would it really be better so?

The soundest writing on the relationship between Christianity and politics is to be found in Chapter *D. III. 1.* of Hans Küng's mighty work *On Being a*

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Christian (1977). Küng is way ahead of both Martin and Norman in identifying the dangers of Liberation Theology and Catholic Marxism, and he states quite firmly that there is nothing in the gospels that either requires a Christian to be a socialist or prohibits him from being one. On the other hand, says Küng, Christians are obliged to apply to public affairs Christ's teachings about identifying with the weak, the sick, and the poor, about forgiveness, self-sacrifice without reward, loving our enemies, and fulfilling God's will for Man's well-being.

So if, looking about them, Christians who feel stirred to action find that the Left-Liberals are the most effective allies in such work, are they to be shunned just because they are to the Left? Why doesn't the Right attract Christian activists? Neither Professor Martin nor Dr Norman seems to realise that most concerned Christians are disillusioned with the parliamentary political establishment as a whole. In much of the Third World the churches were for long the *only* organisations through which protest could be expressed.

I AGREE with Professor Martin when he writes: "Once theologians are deprived of faith they turn to hope, and hope frustrated turns to politics . . . ." The next question, and one which the church is apparently determined not to face, is *why* have its best brains lost faith? To some extent it is like England losing an Empire and failing to find a new role in the world. The church has seen most of its functions in health, education, welfare, and ethics taken over and secularised, and politics claiming (falsely) to have the answers to human suffering. But I suggest that the church now has to think the unthinkable: that not only the church *but the faith itself* has run out of steam and needs overhauling. Whose responsibility this is—the Holy Spirit's, perhaps—is not for me to say. But the advocates of high spirituality don't seem to have come up with anything.

I do not believe that the church is, in fact, so riddled with psittacine Left-Liberals as Martin, Norman, and Simple like to assume. Their view of Christians with whom they do not happen to agree is tinted with an arrogance made easier by not knowing many of the sort of people they pretend to be talking about. For example, the Reverend Harry Morton, General Secretary of the British Council of Churches, is firmly anti-revolutionary; and the Bishop of Truro, who presides over the Church of England's Board for Social Responsibility, presents its policies to the General Synod in rigorously theological and nonpolitical terms. Nor can I recognise any of the concerned clergy that I know in Martin's undergraduate parody of the Ten Commandments. But then it is only a piece of

Opiate: Religion of the People . . .

"RICK THE VIC", *the pot-smoking curate, went to jail for nine months yesterday, unrepentant. As he stood in the dock, a bearded figure in jeans and dog-collar, he affirmed his belief that there was nothing wrong in giving "joints" to schoolboy members of a pop group.*

"I am accused of corruption, of introducing young people to destruction and drug addiction," said the Rev. Richard Mayes, of Beaufort Street, Chelsea. "But I have done nothing harmful at all."

Judge Martyn Ward told the 30-year-old clergyman at Southend Crown Court in Essex: "There can be few parents of young people in this country who would not be apprehensive, if not downright angry, at any person who introduced their children to cannabis."

MAYES, ONCE REGARDED *as the most able young priest in the Chelmsford diocese, now faces the likelihood of being defrocked. Mayes was sentenced on eight charges only a few hundred yards from St Mary's Church, Prittlewell, where until his arrest and resignation he was the trendiest curate the parishioners had ever seen.*

Yesterday, having at first pleaded not guilty, he admitted supplying joints to four sixth form members of a punk rock group called "Nigel and the Ripsnorters" at Borden Grammar School in Sittingbourne, Kent.

It happened, he said, twice. He had already pleaded guilty to six charges of possessing cannabis and allowing his flat at Westcliffe-on-Sea to be used for drug taking. Two other charges of giving the Kent boys joints when they came to play in his church were dismissed.

Mayes met the pupils when his motorcycle broke down on the M2 on his way to France and he was invited to stay at one of their homes.

THE CURATE SAID: *"I first smoked cannabis at the age of 16 and it has not done any harm."*

Here again the judge disagreed. He told Mayes: "It might be felt by some who have seen and heard you that you yourself have exhibited some symptoms of the habitual drug taker."

THE CURATE'S BISHOP, the Rt. Rev. John Trillo, told the court that Mayes was liable to be disqualified as a clergyman now, despite previous highly satisfactory reports.

The Bishop said: "I formed a high opinion of his integrity and willingness to work hard."

Ironically, as Mayes explained before the hearing, he believes that smoking pot helped him "to get a lot of kids to church."

DAILY MAIL

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journalism—what we in the profession call a "knocking piece."[1]

It would have been more rewarding to read how Professor Martin himself would supply the spiritual deficiencies—and they are real enough—in contemporary Christian action. If "conserving" is what he believes in he may, I suppose, share Dr Norman's curious admiration for the Russian Orthodox position—that almost any sacrifice to the secular authority is worthwhile provided the priesthood is allowed to keep the ancient rituals going behind the iconostasis. It is all very picturesque and spiritual and clericalist, but I can't see it doing for the land that produced John Ball, Wycliffe, Cromwell, Fox, Wesley, and other notorious trouble-makers.

[1] Incidentally, the Bible actually *names* not a dozen prophets, as Professor Martin states, but forty-four—plus references to numerous others unnamed and a general invitation from St Paul: "For ye may all prophesy one by one . . . ."

Reply to Priestland

MR PRIESTLAND'S COMMENT is so total a misreading of my article I don't know whether to ask him to pay some minimal attention to the text or to try to educate him in a few brief paragraphs.

His difficulty seems to be that he has no knowledge whatsoever of my writings over the last fifteen years and is equipped with a simple polarised understanding of the world. Since I am critical of some current fashions he naturally supposes that I am an ally of Dr Edward Norman.

This was just the kind of thinking about which I complained; and Mr Priestland has rushed in to provide me with further illustrative material. I suppose I could, like Mr Priestland, engage in a distasteful parade of my political *curriculum vitae*. I have, as it happens, never voted Conservative in my life, and have been associated with Amnesty International, with campaigns on capital punishment and homosexual behaviour, etc. But I do *not* admit the validity of those simple categorisations in terms of Left and Right which protect people like Mr Priestland from the pain of thought.

I expressed the same sort of reservations about the cultural postures adopted by some of the clergy as my colleague Richard Titmuss had about student enthusiasms and my friend John Vaizey has about aspects of recent educational theory. But it seems impossible to set out such reservations without some sincere but silly ass thinking I wrote the Reith lectures. I did not. So will Mr Priestland please address his inchoate miseries to the Reverend Edward Norman.

I have never said that once upon a time the Church was just a treasury of spirituality or recommended that it now confine itself to the realm of the spirit. On that Mr Priestland must either find a quotation with which to prove his point or formally withdraw. Nor does what I say lack documentation, as he will find out if he consults the five hundred items in the bibliography of my *General Theory of Secularisation* (1978). His conventional sneer about sociology is cheap, ignorant, and irrelevant. If we sociologists clothe ourselves in numbers we are accused of obfuscation; if we engage in the lively use of words, journalists jibe at us for being journalists.

LET ME ILLUSTRATE Mr Priestland's method by the reference to his extraordinary aside about "bemedalled preachers." He takes off from the catena of quotations placed editorially adjacent to my article but plainly separate from the text. He notes among them a reference

Translating "This Britain"

SINCE THE CLERICS who have replaced the Shakespearean poetry of the King James' version of the Bible by flat, uninspiring modern prose (and have not, thereby, increased church attendance by one jot or tittle) are now exercising their dessicated scholarship on our equally glorious heirloom, the Book of Common Prayer, they will be wise to omit that ancient formula for cursing people, the Commination Service, lest it be invoked against them by Prof. David Martin and me in the presence of a very full congregation indeed.

Meanwhile, I have been having a few lurid nightmares. These nightmares are that they will be invited to bring Shakespeare up to date as well.

A few nights ago I dreamt that, as Mark Antony, I was expected to say this:

Ladies and Gentlemen, your attention please,
I'm here to speak a few memorial words
About my dear friend, Julius, now deceased.
I think it's generally accepted that
We all remember people's nastier sides
And tend to overlook their better traits.
Brutus, who is a well respected man,
Says Caesar had an eye for the main chance,
If true, that was a pity . . .

Last night Richard II fell victim in my dreams to those faceless pedants and to their Cromwellian lust for destroying the beautiful:

Come on, let's sit down and have a talk
About the deaths of various Heads of State:
How some have had their heads chopped off and some
Shot at in Motorcades, and some deposed
By groups of angry Colonels. . . .

At that exciting juncture my mind revolted and woke me up; but as soon as I dozed off again this was the dreadful consequence:

This royal throne of Kings, this scepter'd Isle,
This muggers' play-ground, this half closed shop,
This Welfare State, this pickets' paradise,
This fortress built to guard trade union power
Against free enterprise and common sense,
This pill-fed breed of men, this racial world,
This garden city set in an oil-slicked sea
Saved by permissiveness from any care
For old discarded themes of right and wrong,
This sparkling jewel of sociology,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this Britain.

Sir John Colville
in the DAILY TELEGRAPH

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to ecclesiastical support for guerrillas. After having roundly condemned this on his own part, he then seems by association to involve me in support for "bemedalled preachers." It is apparently all right for *him* to condemn ecclesiastically financed guerrillas and award himself good marks for high-minded peaceability; but he can then somehow entrammel me in support of mindless militarism without my so much as even mentioning guerrillas or the peace issue.

What I actually said was this: it is very difficult to excise a "cancerous patriotism" without also cutting into the vital organs of decent loyalty and identity. In this area of the body politic the cancer and the vitality lie extraordinarily close together. The same also applies when it comes to excising the sentimental moralism of the Left-Liberal establishment. There too poisonous nonsense is mixed with a concern for basic decencies.

Yet I used my knife with explicit care. I applauded the stands made with respect to race and poverty. Likewise: resistance to authoritarian rule in Korea, South Africa and Brazil. Likewise: the end of old-style *intégrisme* and old-style militarism. I even said that Catholics exploited the frisson of reviving the archaic in the context of the revolutionary "with a great deal of charm." What could be more clear or more obvious even for the single-channel antennae of a fellow-journalist?[1]

But (and here I sinned grievously) I also defended those ordinary decent pieties and respects which are the life of democratic polities, and which underpin our essays in liberality. I implied that the World Council of Churches had a sharp eye open for the misdemeanours of liberal societies and exercised a politic blindness about new-style repressions where these occurred under approved progressive banners. I have actually *heard* distaste expressed for Russian religious dissidents. I also defended the conservation of certain resources of rare value, like the Anglican Prayer Book and the Authorised Version against those who prefer the Group-Grope mandatory communality. Now, we are all of course tangled up in seismic shifts of power which we only half understand, and in policies which engender the opposite consequences to that intended. We face a mobilisation of hope in the interests of élites (especially intellectual élites), an invocation of "liberation" behind which stalks the suppression of all personal freedom.

Men repress in the name of liberty, obfuscate in the name of science, destroy in the name of creativity, and organise whole societies into armed camps in the name of universal peace.

THIS MEANS THAT we are caught up in a situation where moralising can often undermine precisely those ends it aims to preserve. In these conditions there is, and can be, no "Christian answer", though there are moments of partial clarity which do occasionally emerge: a Bonhoeffer in Germany, a Huddleston in South Africa.

Faced with these problems I discern a split between the psychic dissolutions proposed along the parochial marches of the Western intelligentsia and the serious business of creating and maintaining such enclaves of partial and intermittent decency as exist in the contemporary world. I am patriot enough to think my own country one such enclave, and I notice that every new Utopia cried up by my friends eventually emerges as an armed encampment run by gangs-of-four. Yet, though Christian faith may waver, this kind of inexorable political hope never dies. Truly we live in a grossly religious and superstitious age where men can hail any light provided it hoists the right words over its ideological platform.

Political action demands, not the assemblage of nice attitudes, and the ritual asseveration of approved words, but the most rigorous acts of the intelligence. As I said, sincerity is not enough; and when linked to the kind of polluted Left-Right categorisation practised by Mr Priestland it is an infernal and self-defeating nuisance.

DAVID MARTIN

London School of Economics

[1] As to the number of the prophets, I was referring to "prophecy" as exercised (say) by Amos, not to prophecy in the Pauline sense or in such scriptural references as "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Relevant, Meaningful, etc.

THE BISHOP OF BEVINDON has asked me to send on the attached note, in the hope that you will be able to print it. There should really be a clenched fist, rather than a cross by his signature; but I am afraid my typewriter has not got one.

PETER SIMPLE

Daily Telegraph
London

DR SPACELEY-TRELLIS WRITES: While agreeing with Mr Priestland on some issues (though I cannot understand why he should regard me as "mythical", except perhaps in terms of discredited, neo-simplistic hermeneutics), I must object to his comparing my action in "waving a machine-gun from the pulpit" with the dragging of a field-gun before the altar of St Paul's and with sermons by reactionary, militarist Tory preachers in élitist Tory schools during the First World War.

My own purpose was to show the congregation what is, in a very real sense, a relevant and meaningful symbol of that revolutionary social compassion which in my view is the very core of liberation theology in the Third World and of the on-going, open-ended Christian–Marxist dialogue.

The racist, sexist preachers of the First World War had no commitment to social change either in Germany or in the German colonies in Africa or for that matter in the British Empire. To compare their institutionalised violence with the compassionate violence of the African freedom-fighters is absurd, as the respective recipients of these two utterly different types of violence would, I am sure, be the first to admit.

† TED BEVINDON

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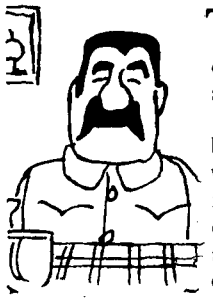
EAST & WEST

Thinking of Berlin & Belgrade

By Milovan Djilas



THE Berlin Blockade and the Soviet Union's attack on Yugoslavia took place simultaneously—in June 1948. Even if there seems to be no connection between these two actions, they were nevertheless undoubtedly the expression of one and the same political policy—the extension of Soviet domination in Europe. In Berlin the Soviet Union successfully effected the division of the city by disbanding the Allied *Kommandatura*, and attempted to strangle the Western sectors with a blockade, while at the same time it forced through a Cominform resolution against Yugoslavia and began a defamatory campaign and an economic and political blockade.

This double-faced and double-edged policy has continued ever since. It is pursued in other, less forceful ways by apparently separate bodies: by governmental power and by the Party. These bodies, however, are neither really separate nor do they act independently of one another. They serve the same ends, and they are united in a single Party- and State-apparatus. They have the same expansionist aims and their propaganda is motivated by these common aims—by the struggle against "Imperialism" (read: the predominance of Soviet power) and against "Revisionism" (read: the hegemony of the Soviet Party over the brother parties of other nations, and therefore for the "ideological" uniformity of all Party bureaucracies).

The simultaneous events of 1948 are well-known, and are remembered by those for whom they have become an active part of present-day reality and their starting-point for the future.

The Berlin Blockade certainly did not cause any open anxiety or any disquieting doubts among Yugoslavian politicians at the time. The Yugoslavian leadership had in fact found itself in a rather subliminal conflict with its Soviet counterparts some months before the blockade of Berlin. Nothing was known about it publicly, although the Eastern European Central Committees had already declared their solidarity with the "critical" letters of Molotov and Stalin to the Yugoslavian Central Committee in May. When, however, the conflict was made public with the publication of the Cominform resolution against Yugoslavia, the new experience—the "inconceivable . . . unbelievable" imperialist aggression by the "homeland of Socialism", the "liberator from Fascism", the "leaders and teachers of progressive humanity, the fraternal socialist countries"—began to penetrate the consciousness of the Yugoslavian leadership, which up to that point had been armour-plated with Soviet Marxist-Leninist ideology.

In the eyes of the Yugoslavian party members, the Berlin Blockade at first confirmed the dogmatic codified "truths" about the Soviet Union being the "bulwark" against Imperialism and Capitalism; it actually strengthened this conviction in many of them. At the same time, however, the Soviet attitude towards Communist Yugoslavia exposed the other "ruthless" side of this "bulwark", bent on supremacy.

The Yugoslavian leadership, however, despite its ideological inflexibility and despite its public formal adherence to the Soviet version, suspected even then (and even admitted) that the Berlin Blockade and the attack on Yugoslavia were connected to one another "in a demonic way", and were a calculated step towards the permanent incorporation of Eastern Europe into the Soviet Union. The fate of Yugoslavia could be discerned in the pincer-movements against Berlin. Signs of unrest began to appear in the Yugoslavian Party. Many could not resolve the dilemma and were caught in old Muscovite ideological traps. Others saw a possible basis for their own political future in a declaration of loyalty to Stalin. Both of these groups have had to pay the price for this. Even the Yugoslavian leadership itself has not been able to shake off the Stalinist legacy it inherited or overcome its Leninist-monopolistic nature.

THE ATTITUDE of the people of Berlin during the Blockade evoked muffled admiration among the Yugoslavian leaders. The readiness to make sacrifices and the courage of the Berliners awoke memories among the Yugoslavian people of heroic moments of their own recent revolutionary struggle and of the international anti-Fascist resistance—memories of the Yugoslavian Partisan days, of the resilience of the people of London during the nights of the Blitz, and the dogged determination of the people of Leningrad. Roles in the world-drama were exchanged overnight. The still topical centre

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of Nazi power and frenzy suddenly became a flash-point and the symbol of resistance and freedom. The Yugoslavian leadership (myself included) was prevented by its ideology from recognising and acknowledging this. But its own position and its instinct allowed it to suspect the truth and pointed it in this new direction.

THE SILENCE OF THE Yugoslavian leaders over the attacks on Berlin and Yugoslavia can only be understood as a dogmatic "blockade of consciousness" and as a nervous marking-time by politicians who did not wish to be included in the "camp of Imperialism" or among the ranks of the "betrayers of Socialism."

But immediately after Stalin's death and at the time of the East German uprising in 1953, this awareness was set free; and with it all doubts and anxieties disappeared. On that occasion, the Yugoslavian press stood openly on the side of the East-German freedom-fighters. Yugoslavia's deputy-chief, the late Edvard Kardelj, spoke out publicly at the time in favour of the struggle of the

Warnings

Belgrade

MILOVAN DJILAS, *the Yugoslav dissident author and former close aide to Marshal Tito, said today he had been warned by the security police to stop what they defined as activities hostile to the country.*

Mr Djilas, 67years old, fell from power 25 years ago and was stripped of all posts in the Government and Communist Party after publishing a series of critical articles challenging the party line. He later published several books in the West, of which two, "The New Class" and "Conversations with Stalin" brought him jail sentences, and he served nine years in prison between 1956 and 1966.

Mr Djilas said that security police officers interviewed him yesterday and accused him of trying to organise dissidents, of being involved in foreign anti-Yugoslav propaganda and of criticising the Communist leaders and the country's Communist system.

"I was told it was the last warning before they take more energetic measures against me," he said.

NEW YORK TIMES

Belgrade

YUGOSLAV OFFICIALS have begun a campaign to curb increased activity by dissidents. This is an apparent response to a demand from some hard-line politicians for a crackdown before the potentially divisive period that will follow President Tito's death.

Many Western diplomats believe the death last month of Edvard Kardelj, once heir-apparent to Marshal Tito, 86, and an important voice of moderation, accelerated this process of division within the Yugoslav leadership.

IN RECENT WEEKS, some of the nation's leading newspapers have denounced Mr Djilas, Mihajlo Mihajlov (a dissident writer now in the United States temporarily), and the Praxis group (which is made up of dissident Marxist philosophers and sociologists who were expelled from teaching jobs at the University of Belgrade four years ago).

Before the press campaign began, Vladimir Bakaric, a leading member of the Yugoslav Politburo, denounced what he called attempts by Serbian and Croatian intellectuals to form a "united front opposition," singling out Mr Djilas as the leader of this movement.

Other officials have also been upset over attempts by Mr Djilas in the last several months to arrange some form of cooperation between dissident intellectuals in Belgrade and in the Croatian capital of Zagreb.

Such cooperation would cut across the traditional divisions between Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians and the other nationalities of Yugoslavia. These divisions could disturb the unity of the country after the death of Marshal Tito.

Mr Djilas believes that intellectuals in the two principal Yugoslav centres, Zagreb and Belgrade, have been too long divided. They have much in common, he says, particularly in their desire for a "democratic pluralism" or multi-party system after Tito's death.

THE PRAXIS GROUP *of professors, though holding political views different from Mr Djilas and the Croatian intellectuals, has also been increasingly active. The group's eight members were suspended from their teaching positions in 1975 and their magazine, "Praxis", was banned when they began advocating forms of Marxism different from the "socialist self-management" of Marshall Tito. Late last year they began holding underground lectures in Belgrade for university students.*

"There is no question that all this activity at this time was a coincidence," said one of the leading Praxis figures, Mihajlo Markovic. "It is happening now, however, because there is a vacuum to fill. We have all been thinking what will happen next in Yugoslavia. We are dismayed by the drift and the lack of direction. Intellectuals have a responsibility in times such as these."

David A. Andelman
in the INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE (*Paris*)

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East German workers against the tyranny which was building its gallows all over Eastern Europe. This shining moment in the post-War history of Germany (or, rather, of its Eastern zone) would prove to have extraordinary consequences even for Yugoslavia's Communists. Since then the Yugoslavian leaders have been preserving and securing the self-determination for Yugoslavia they once achieved. But their will to resist and their idealistic solidarity are growing increasingly weaker.

DÉTENTE IN EUROPE accompanied the cooling of the situation in Berlin. The pacification of unrest there was in fact essential for Détente in Europe and internationally. In politics there are rare, almost inconceivable occurrences which can be to everyone's advantage. If that were not so, there would be no such thing as politics, with its concentrated struggle of carefully defined, active social forces. No one can rest content with a Europe which is not at peace, either in the East or the West—if only by virtue of the fact that this has been the general, automatic, ingrained attitude on both sides for a long time. And to abandon it would mean the undermining of previously established political positions. This is also the case with Détente in Europe and Détente in Berlin.

As for me, I am now convinced—just as I was when the ideological positions behind East-West relations first began to be dismantled—that the present Détente is helping those dissidents (and events related to them in Eastern Europe) who are involved in the current democratic developments. These are movements which cannot be exclusively ascribed either to East or West, nor to any definite fixed social or intellectual philosophy. That's why it seems important to me to speak about this in connection with Berlin particularly, since post-War Berlin has been the rallying point for European dissident groups in the past, and this can certainly be the case again in the future.

However, I do not see every kind of Détente as being beneficial to the democratic dissidents. A Détente which would for example, cover the dividing-up of "spheres of influence" between the USA and the USSR—or which would mean agreement to desist from any criticism of authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies, wherever they might appear—would do the dissidents in the East more harm than good. And not only them, but all those who are fighting for the free development of individuals and nations.

One cannot ignore this argument, however much governments in the East and the West would like to. For how would it be possible to silence free, democratic opinion in the West without endangering everything which is called "Western civilisation" (or, at least, everything that we understand by this concept)? How can one hope to evade this argument, since critical thinking is the intellectual base of this civilisation, and especially since Eastern Europe itself is ultimately just as much a product of it and shaped by it? West and East are, at least as far as Europe is concerned, intertwined in one and the same world, even if it is a discordant one.

Consequently I do not mean here an arbitrary Détente, but one which gradually aspires to a non-violent and democratic change in existing relations—a Détente which means cooperation but not an unconditional one—not a cooperation which unilaterally dispenses with criticism or is enforced by means of blackmail and threats. I am speaking of a Détente which is the result of strength and confidence, and not of weakness and lack of orientation.

IT IS INDISPUTABLE that the Helsinki agreement on security and cooperation in Europe provided a useful starting-point for such a Détente. In this respect it is really irrelevant that the Soviet Union only singles out its own "good will" as a reason for its readiness for Détente, and not the encircled predicament in which it actually finds itself. For it is not only the situation of the West that has changed since the War but also that of the Soviet Union. Soviet society is split down the middle today; world Communism has disintegrated into national components; and not only has the Soviet economic system by no means "caught up with and overtaken" the USA, but it is in more and more urgent need of the more highly developed "Western" technology.

The Détente is demolishing ideological doctrines and schemata. Because, even if ideology is dying out, it is still a useful means of shaping consciousness and of binding together the apparatus of oppression. Life in a world which is not disposed towards hostility, and which the Soviet Union and the Communists are not capable of destroying and subjugating, must further deepen the ideological crisis and create a climate for new ideas that correspond more closely to real life.

THIS CAN BE SEEN in the "intellectual" movements in Eastern Europe. The more the Détente has taken root, the more nervous and aggressive the fears for ideological uniformity and internal security are becoming over there. Relations over there have "developed" to the point where international agreements (like that between Bulgaria and East Germany, for example) must include pledges of "willingness to take the necessary measures for the protection and defence of socialist achievements, security, and

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independence. . . ." This is the face of systems which sustain themselves by means of arrests, threats, prohibitions, and national isolation. . . . Ideologists and ideologies can only conceive of life in a hostile world.

For the dissidents, Détente also opens up other prospects: more intensive and more objective information, more communication, milder treatment, and the like. But two aspects—a weakening of the closed nature of the "Eastern" system, without which any cooperation is impossible, and a depreciation of ideology—seem to me to be the crucial ones, and as such sufficient to strengthen the inspirational influence of the Détente on democratic developments in Eastern Europe.

By this I do not mean to say that Détente and Dissidence are directly linked with one another, that Détente therefore has an automatic effect on dissidence and strengthens it. The Détente is expanding faster than the democratic movements. But Détente is not developing independently of dissidence, the less so as it is bound up with it, and largely presupposes it. Their interdependence is therefore obvious: there cannot be a Détente which is durable and stable without the prospect of human rights becoming a reality in Eastern Europe. These rights, however, will not be attained in an absurd closed system and in a poisoned political atmosphere.

THE ROLE OF BERLIN in the process of Détente and for the future of dissidence clearly rests on its special position as a focal centre and as a symbol of current division, of fear and of hope. Hardly less conspicuous, however, is the grim and ominous role of "German" terrorism or, rather, of international terrorism on German soil.

I do not intend to defend the present-day West German social order here, if only for the simple reason that I do not know enough about it. But I will say this much: for all those who are not tempted to validate themselves in pipe-dreams of "new" and "perfect" societies (and to disguise the fact)—and I hope that is quite a substantial majority—West Germany is one of the best ordered and most prosperous of societies. It is probably these very features of the West German Republic which really worry the terrorists, and not its "capitalism", its "bourgeoisie" and its "consumer society." The economic prosperity and the parliamentary democracy, the libertarian openness and social fairness of West Germany have alienated little groups who hate all that as "grounds" for their own shortcomings and as an impediment to their utopian romanticism. Faced with the dilemma of having to choose between a predominantly banal or an ultimately lawless life, they decided on terrorism, in order thereby to provide themselves with the pre-conditions for their "anarchy": uncontrolled, and hence absolute, power. There have always been people who have attempted to portray their own failures and their personal indisposition as a general social "good."

THAT IS HOW it appears from the outside. Just because there is no satisfactory explanation for this phenomenon, is not reason enough for confused resignation. We in the East, who still have to endure the terror of ideological monopoly, also hope that German democracy will combat terrorism even more resolutely and self-critically, or even more democratically and solidly. A society which does not fight consistently for its own values condemns itself to decline and decay.

Berlin can discover its new role in taking the lead in this struggle once again—unquestionably with less *Glanz und Gloria*, but with greater chances for lasting spiritual and social values instead. The task of gradually but permanently realising these values would admittedly be more universal and European than the role played by Berlin in the past.

Peace is not an absolute good, just as war is not an absolute evil. But it is now quite obvious that both parts of Europe—and this also includes the USA and the USSR as European "extremes"—are inclining—both spontaneously and on an official government level, towards a mutual exchange, towards a relatively intensive exchange in the economic field, and towards a still—especially on the part of the East—constricted, restrained, and very limited exchange of people and ideas.

The West cannot solve the problem of freedom in the East—I mean the concrete liberties, the freedom to express oneself or to organise oneself. But it can lend moral support and the power of the printed word. With the aid of sharp cultural criticism it can considerably weaken and call into question the privileged dogmas and organisations of the "Eastern" monopolists.

This may well involve a lengthy process, extending over still incalculable and uncertain periods of time. But in this long journey—towards a Europe no longer divided by systems and ideologies—Berlin can have a material, active, pivotal role. If one were to judge merely on the basis of dogged determination in questions of human rights and political identity—as Berlin has demonstrated up till now in the laborious 35-year-old contest between two worlds—then Berlin will find itself once again. And it could "amaze the world" once more—with the brilliance of new ideas, with urbane liveliness and urban vitality.

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LETTERS

"Holocaust"

BRUNO BETTELHEIM gives a true account of how entire Jewish communities came to "deny reality" in their extreme state [ENCOUNTER, December 1978]. But it is a rather abstract psychological account, and I felt the need to translate it into concrete terms—drawn from my memory of the deportations in Hungary in the summer of 1944.

Long before our turn had come, there had been terrifying rumours about transports of Jews (probably from Italy) passing through the station of our town on their way to camps in Poland. The people in the transports had been heard crying for water, calling out messages. This kind of rumour was not once mentioned when it had become clear that we ourselves were facing deportation; and I don't think this was merely "to protect the children" (I was 13 at the time) but part of an attempt not to connect . . . event with consequence. At every stage of our systematic rounding up—in the hastily-set-up ghetto, in the foul transit camp in the brick works—reassuring signs were looked for and found. Even the facts of being rounded up, counted one by one, actually fed for days and then put on cattle trucks under the supervision of a high-ranking *SS*-officer—all these were, in a half-believing way, considered as "good signs." It was some kind of investment in us. The Germans needed labour, or hostages; otherwise they would hardly need to take all that trouble. Otherwise they might as well. . . .

And so it went on, a sustained attempt at reassuring reasoning. Someone had seen a postcard sent by a deportee from Germany (not Poland—the difference was dwelt on). The Allies had landed in France. The Russians had started a new offensive. These rumours turned out to be true. And our worst fear—the separation of families—had not yet taken place. Not to do anything that might provoke our separation seemed essential. Later, on the train, when consciousness was enfeebled by hunger and lack of water in the heat, by sickness, by the stench and the shouts, the general air of unreality, a voice kept on saying "nothing worse can happen now." Sometimes it was an inner voice, sometimes distinctly spoken.

How many people knew about the death camps? My own experience leads me to believe that in a community of thousands only very few people had direct information about the worst. Those few escaped, or committed suicide, or—like my father—lapsed into silent apathy from which there was no recovery.

ANDREW KARPATI KENNEDY

University of Bergen
Norway

Sobibor

I MISSED the piece on the Sobibor revolt by Louis de Jong [ENCOUNTER, December]. I learnt about it when I met Dr de Jong in Amsterdam in December 1978. I do not wish to say anything about Dr de Jong's article. However, I feel entitled to protest against your description of it as a revelation. In fact, *The Jewish Observer and Middle East Review* published a long article of mine based on information received from the leader of the revolt in 1964—an article that was reprinted in Israel and the United States. My book *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe*, which has been described as "monumental", appeared in November 1974 and it contains the most comprehensive account of the Sobibor revolt so far. Yuri Suhl's *They Fought Back*, which opens up with a description of the revolt, was published in this country in 1968. I hope it is not too late for you to inform your readers that your description of de Jong's article was quite wrong.

REUBEN AINSZTEIN

The Cottage, Green Street
Little Hadham, Hertfordshire

Death of a Sympathiser

THERE WAS much that was thoughtful and moving in Jean Lacouture's bitter reflections on the revolutions in Viet Nam and Cambodia for which there had been so much fellow-traveller sympathy in the West (ENCOUNTER, May). But one wanted to cry out at so many points—why *so* late, why does it take *so* long for each new pro-revolutionary generation to learn the simple truths which so many other generations before them learned, with "strangled cries" as "the Gods failed"?

Still, the French are not alone; and perhaps you might have pointed up the story for your Anglo-Saxon readers with the recent tragic case of Mr Malcolm Caldwell. I enclose the clippings which you might well put into one of your documentary boxes that I, among no doubt other readers, find so useful.

Caldwell, a 47-year-old London academic, was shot in Cambodia (on 23 December 1978) when gunmen raided the Government's VIP-guest-house in Phnom Penh. He was known for his sympathy for the Khmer Rouge régime in Cambodia, and was killed after completing a two-week tour of the country with two American journalists, who flew back to Peking with the body and have since given a full eye-witness account of the attack. I append the following two clippings from the *Daily Telegraph*—the first an Editorial, and the second a protest from Caldwell's family. Let the reader draw his own conclusions.

EDITORIAL

WHAT A PARABLE *of our times is the fearful murder in Cambodia, at the age of 47, of Malcolm Caldwell, the Lecturer in South-East Asian affairs at the London University School of Oriental and African Studies! Intelligent and, by all accounts, charming, he nonetheless lent his energy and scholarship to the defence of one of the darkest totalitarian régimes of even this totalitarian century. Few horrors by the new rulers of Cambodia seemed too vast for him either to deny that they were happening or to insist that they had all been exaggerated, or to imply that the victims had it coming to them anyway. This is not to doubt his sincerity; indeed his activities were all the more appalling because of his sincerity.*

For years, Caldwell used his gifts in defence of Hanoi. When a still more frightful force gained power in neighbouring Cambodia, he naturally transferred his allegiance to it. Alas, there has turned out to be a crucial

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and terrible difference between him and all the other senior common room revolutionaries; he has himself become one of revolution's numberless victims—the sort of fatality which he tended to explain as inevitable in the building of the new society. Hanoi got rid of him, so it is said, as part of its dingy local quarrel with the new Cambodia; but it could just as easily have been the other way around. According to a sympathetic obituarist in the Guardian *Caldwell had always tried to "understand the stories, often exaggerated, of mass executions"; had believed "retribution" against United States collaborators to be "understandable." Well, no doubt his murderers thought his death necessary to* their *revolution. Malcolm Caldwell's life thus reaches a dreadfully appropriate apothesis.*

DAILY TELEGRAPH

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SIR—On behalf of Malcolm Caldwell's family, we are writing to protest most strongly at your scurrilous leader on his death in Kampuchea.

Your opposition to his views is well known as is your consistent denial of space to allow him to refute distorted, inaccurate and unreferenced reporting of the situation in South-East Asia.

Most of the time Malcolm found your lack of understanding so appalling as to be humorous but occasionally he was sufficiently incensed to write a scholarly reply in the cynical certainty that it would never appear in print. To his credit he took the kindly view that the reason for this was that you knew your readers well enough to know that they could not follow well-researched and substantiated evidence.

His life was dedicated to obtaining justice for the people of South-East Asia and, while your article was bad enough, the leader was unbelievably insulting and insensitive to someone whose efforts to comprehend the political realities of South-East Asia none of your staff correspondents will ever begin to emulate in their collective life-times.

LYN CALDWELL
(Widow)
DAVID CALDWELL
(Brother)

Bexley, Kent

MY OWN conclusion is this: Before a revolution begins to devour its own children, it afflicts them with idealism, hobbles them with dogmatism, blinds them with enthusiasm, cripples them with simple-mindedness, all in an appalling dress-rehearsal for a nasty end on a Paris guillotine, in a *Gulag* camp, or in the corridor of some gunmen-infested Governmental resthouse in "the heart of darkness."

JOHN B. PHILLIPS

Oxford

In the "Great Tradition"

A Rebuttal—By Q. D. LEAVIS

HAVING READ the article on my husband in your May number I must demand a hearing for essential corrections of fact, for falsehoods if not rebutted will pass into the record as historical.

(1) On page 60 Mr Harvey states that my husband "At the age of 41 . . . began the full lectureship he was to hold till 1959. Later he added ten years and more to the delays in his official career" and enlarges on this point forgivingly. The facts are that all that the then Professor ("Q") could secure for Leavis, when he decided he must interfere, was an *Assistant* Lectureship, and even that only because Downing, whose Director of English he had become, pressed for status for their Fellow. An assistant lectureship is a temporary appointment for three years normally given to young graduates on trial, then carrying only a derisory salary, and no security of tenure. But my husband had behind him a great deal of published work widely known, he was a famous teacher in the university and had been for ten years. As far as Mr Harvey's Faculty was concerned Leavis would have continued on this basis—applying every three years for renewal—till he retired. But when he was in his fifties I could no longer bear this and the fact that his pension prospects (retirement was then at 65) were virtually nil; I insisted that he should go to the Professor (Willey) and demand some advancement as of right. This he agreed was reasonable, but on returning from the interview he told me that when he said that if he remained an assistant lecturer until he retired he should consider he had been very unjustly treated, Willey replied with a complete absence of sympathy: "Well, I can't do anything about it." My husband then said "I don't believe you", and soon retired in disgust. But other and more decent forces in the university were at work on the Faculty and he was subsequently elected to a full lectureship, at an age (52) when other much less distinguished men became professors. These facts, already recorded by Leavis in a letter to the *T.L.S.* (23 March 1972) and reprinted in *Letters in Criticism* (1974), seem to have escaped Mr Harvey's attention.

(2) ". . . the periodical *Scrutiny* was started by L. C. Knights and Donald Culver, largely with the aim of getting Leavis into print." He was already in print with two books and two pamphlets of some reputation, and what the innocent Harvey is retailing is Dr Tillyard's slander that "Leavis has started a periodical because he can't get published anywhere else." The truth is that three post-graduates, with an ambition typical at their age, had wanted to found a magazine but their project was beyond them. They applied to us for help; my husband found them a title and contributors and rewrote their pretentious manifesto (it began "In an age of print . . ."). The New Zealand research student withdrew, because he had envisaged publishing mostly stories and verse I think, the American, Culver, was absorbed in other interests, and we found ourselves committed to bringing out a quarterly, with the financial obligations, for the next nineteen years, with myself as typist and sub-editor willy-

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nilly.

(3) The statement on p. 60: "his relations with H. S. Bennett . . . had become bitter" is misleading, but Harvey is of course concerned to excuse his college. The truth is that Bennett was an ex-elementary-school teacher who had got himself appointed Director of English at Emmanuel after the War. Driven by the ambitions of his wife, who after taking one part of the English Tripos had married and produced four children and had done no post-graduate work, he was obliged to oust Leavis from his own college, of which he was a History Scholar and where he had taken a First in English and a Ph.D. and where he was a most successful teacher for all papers of the English examinations. In order to replace Leavis by his wife Bennett had to invent a number of grievances against his colleague and then fix a meeting of the Fellows in the Long Vacation when few were present (afterwards several Fellows said that if they had been present they would never have allowed such a decision) to deprive Leavis of the college teaching and to turn him out of his college room. We were not informed until, coming into the college at the end of the Vacation, we found the room's furnishings turned outside. My husband saw a tutor (not the Master), Mr Hele, and asked the reason; Hele replied "Don't you know?" and walked off. Bennett it seems had shirked telling, but on Hele's prompting he wrote a letter to state the college's decision (no reasons were given). Mr Hele, when he subsequently became Master, then sent his wife to call on us and express contrition for the way my husband had been treated, cold comfort. Except for bouts of bad temper from Bennett, my husband had had no reason to suppose that, in Harvey's words, relations were "bitter"; he had put up with a great deal and worked very hard for the College and given it a reputation for English, which it lost very soon after his departure, under the new management.

(4) Subsequently Leavis made Downing famous as a centre of English, and when Harvey writes "As an undergraduate I was able to go regularly to his seminars at Downing" he is disguising the fact that he was among the many privileged at different times over the years to be present at Leavis's Downing supervision classes (he objected to their being called seminars) for nothing. No payment was made or received for the extra work involved, nor did Leavis earn any gratitude from the Faculty either, on the contrary, they put it about that he was making money by poaching on other supervisors' grounds. We lived for half a century—I still do—in an atmosphere of slander, denigration and spite and I therefore object to Harvey's writing this off (p. 66) as imaginary. His pseudo-psychological explanation is an added impertinence. We had been made social lepers, and it was very natural, human nature being what it is—and as deplorably natural in the academic world as anywhere—that our beneficiaries and sometime collaborators should have found it expedient to drop us as they worked their way upwards and to justify themselves in so doing by allegations that have no foundation in truth. Mr Harvey has no doubt been colloguing with such—he has never been even an acquaintance of ours, as the numerous mistakes in his article demonstrate.

(5) Even his account of the last Faculty lecture my husband gave is incorrect. Leavis finished by saying "This is the end" and then, as he walked out, said to himself (aloud) "And this is the end." He was thinking with bitterness of the ending of his life's work at Cambridge and incapable of dramatising the occasion by such a gesture as "Put out the light." He was dropped by the Faculty on retirement without any mark of recognition who, as someone subsequently said in print, proceeded to pretend that he had never existed.

Q. D. LEAVIS

Cambridge

TAKING THE POINTS Mrs Leavis makes in order, *(1)* F. R. Leavis at no time held an Assistant Lectureship (a disadvantageous post now unique to Cambridge, which as it happens I hold myself). Assistant Lectureships existed in the Faculty in the '30s, but Leavis himself was appointed to a Lectureship (in 1936), and in 1939 was reappointed to the retiring age: Mrs Leavis may confirm this in the *Cambridge University Reporter*.

I must acknowledge that in trying to set down accurately the dates of Leavis's appointments I did not record a very substantial practical injustice. I have now looked up the schedule of stipends, which shows that Leavis's Lectureship was one of three "part work" appointments which received only half the basic stipend; he started to receive the full stipend in 1946, when he was 51.

(2) Manifestly I do not pass on anyone's slander to the effect that "Leavis has started a periodical because he can't get published anywhere else", since I say, immediately before mentioning the founding of *Scrutiny* in 1932, that Leavis had "begun serious publication in 1930", and again "from 1930 on there followed the steady progress of critical books. . . ."

I certainly had gathered that a large part of the intentions of the men who founded *Scrutiny* (L. C. Knights and Donald Culver) was that a journal should exist in which Leavis's criticism could be published regularly and in quantity. Obviously Mrs Leavis in no way reciprocates the generous admiration that animated them; her present account of *Scrutiny*—now described as having been from the start an ungrateful burden shouldered reluctantly—differs from that given in her husband's *Retrospect* ("We who founded *Scrutiny* could have no illusions . . .", p. 1) in a way that reads sadly.

(3) My article has not been received in my own College as an exercise in whitewashing Emmanuel, and I do not believe any reader other than Mrs Leavis could put that construction on it. I make it clear that I think Emmanuel's dropping of Leavis was a misfortune for the College, and I cannot believe that the motives of those responsible were good. But Mrs Leavis's particular chain of causes seems to me improbable at the least. Since Bennett was Director of Studies, if he wished to assign less supervisions to Leavis and more to his wife—or no supervisions to Leavis and all the supervisions to his wife—he could have done so without more ado. Surely the main reason Emmanuel dropped Leavis was that his first Faculty Lectureship had come to an end, and the College did not want to be involved in supporting a teacher without University office—a bad principle (but not uncommon in Cambridge Colleges) which Downing to its credit disregarded.

(4) In recording that "as an undergraduate I was able to go regularly to his seminars at Downing" I disguise no impropriety or exploitation as to the payment Leavis got for supervisions. Dr Stevens, the Director of Studies at my College (Magdalene), was asked by Leavis if he

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would provide supervisions in medieval literature for the Downing men, and Leavis suggested that in return the Magdalene men might attend the Practical Criticism classes he gave for his Downing students. We went to Downing as part of this exchange arrangement; in any case I cannot think that our silent attendance at these classes, which were in effect extempore lectures, involved Leavis in any extra work.

(5) My account of Leavis's last Faculty lecture simply is correct. I was sitting in the front row, and heard distinctly everything he said.

I had better add that I have not "collogued" with any "sometime collaborators" of the Leavises who afterwards dropped them "as they worked their way upwards." I have known perhaps half a dozen people senior to me who admired the work of the Leavises with a devotion I can hardly imagine being equalled; who by what they said in support of the Leavises, both in teaching and also in print, damaged their careers very materially (none of them have Faculty jobs in Cambridge); and whose only acknowledgment from the Leavises consisted of brutal denunciations which were wholly unjust.

JOHN HARVEY

Emmanuel College
Cambridge

Hannah Arendt's "Panic"

I WANT ONLY to take issue with one factual statement of Mr Walter Laqueur's article on Hannah Arendt:

> "Hannah Arendt was certainly at the time [after the publication of the Eichmann book] in a state of near panic (as her writings show) firmly convinced that the Elders of Zion had conspired to 'get her.'"

May I suggest that this statement is outrageously at variance with the facts which I could ascertain during that period. Hannah Arendt was indeed distressed, if not bitter at times, about the Jewish reaction to her book, but at no time was she near panic nor did she believe in the existence of the Elders of Zion. How Mr Laqueur can state otherwise, not in terms of a metaphor but as a matter of fact, is beyond me.

HANS J. MORGENTHAU

New York City

I HAVE NOTHING to add to what I wrote in my article. The shrillness of some of Miss Arendt's comments, the insinuations about a conspiracy to "get her", are sufficient evidence. Of course, she did not believe in the existence of the "historical" Elders of Zion; but she certainly did think that the "Jewish Establishment" was engaged in concerted action against her.

WALTER LAQUEUR

Wiener Library
Institute of Contemporary History
London

Sir Harold Beeley Replies

MANY YEARS AGO I heard Philip Guedalla informing a historical congress that there were two kinds of historian: professionals such as himself, and teachers of history in universities who made minor contributions in their spare time. Having been one of the latter for fifteen years, I am therefore not surprised to be classified by T. R. Fyvel (Letters, May) as an amateur historian.

The professionals, however, can sometimes be disingenuous. Mr Fyvel, while recognising the reasons for British policy in Palestine before, during and after the Second World War, asks if it was necessary for the Foreign Office to be quite so zealous in carrying it out so far as Jewish immigration into Palestine was concerned. He complains that we put pressure on the Balkan countries and Turkey to stop Jewish refugees "just in case they escaped in the direction of Palestine"; and that we insisted that Jewish survivors of Hitler must stay in Europe "lest some should reach Palestine." These phrases are presumably ironical, for Mr Fyvel must know that the bands of refugees leaving Europe were organised by people who were determined to take them to Palestine and nowhere else, and whose primary motive was to break down Britain's policy in that country. It was they, and not the British, who ruled out all other possible destinations.

Hyam Maccoby addresses himself to my suggestion that most of the Jewish settlers in Palestine during the present century are not descended from the Israelites of the Bible. He does not dispute the "facts about the wide extent of Jewish proselytism"; but he declines to accept that they have any bearing on Jewish rights in Palestine. "The 'descent' from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a spiritual, not a physical, descent." But this is exactly what I was suggesting. Zionism, on the other hand, is based not on spiritual affinities but on the concept of a physical return to Palestine. To the extent that this concept is shown to be unhistorical, it seems to me that Zionism's credentials are weakened. Mr Maccoby does not agree:

> "Converts to Judaism and their descendants, according to Sir Harold Beeley, have no right to regard Israel as their land. But, by the same token, naturalised Englishmen and their descendants have no right to call England their land."

It was not the position of Jews of non-Palestinian origin in Israel with which I was concerned. Before Israel existed they claimed rights in Palestine, and unlike naturalised Englishmen in England they claimed a superior right to that of the majority of the existing inhabitants. It is this and its consequences which appear to me to have been a denial of natural justice.

HAROLD BEELEY

London

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Guns, Bayonets & W.W.1

REVISIONISM UNDER FIRE. The enthusiasm of "R" in his February *Column* for John Terraine's demythologising of the Great War of 1914–1918 needs some salt. Terraine's discovery, for example, that "artillery inflicted far more deaths and far worse wounds than other weapons" is no news at all, to the public or to scholars—except for some, perhaps, overtrained by war movies. But the denigration of the machine gun that seems to follow is a silly play of simplistics. As anyone who has ever been under machine-gun fire—even on an infiltration training course—knows, the guns hold men down. Sited for crossfire, in even haphazard association with barbed wire, machine guns force men into holes in the ground—where they can be reached by artillery, including, most effectively, high trajectory mortar and howitzer fire. Machine guns and barbed wire create optimum conditions for artillery to do its work. To put down machine guns in order to elevate artillery here is of the order of disparagement of the bayonet because it is attached to a rifle.

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AUTHORS

Gillian Tindall's study of the urban history of a North London "village", *The Fields Beneath*, was published in 1977 by Temple Smith. Her latest novel, *The Intruder*, will appear in the autumn (Hodder).

Jean-Marie Benoist's conversation with Claude Lévi-Strauss originally appeared in a shortened version in *Le Monde*.

Peter Porter's most recent volume of poems, *The Cost of Seriousness*, is published by Oxford University Press.

Roy Fuller was from 1968–1973 Oxford Professor of Poetry, and his lectures given during those years have been published under the titles *Owls and Artificers* and *Professors and Gods* (Deutsch, 1971, 1973).

Blake Morrison is on the editorial staff of the *Times Literary Supplement*. His poems and criticism have appeared in ENCOUNTER, *Critical Quarterly*, *Poetry Nation Review* and the *New Statesman*, and his critical study, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s*, will be published next year by Oxford University Press.

J. I. M. Stewart was until 1973 Reader in English Literature at Oxford University. His quintet of novels, "A Staircase in Surrey", was completed last year with the publication of *Full Term* (Gollancz).

Bernard Bergonzi is Professor of English at the University of Warwick. His study *Reading the Thirties* was published in 1978 by Macmillan Press, who this year bring out a new revised edition of *The Situation of the Novel*.

Helen McNeil is a Lecturer in the School of English and American Studies, University of East Anglia. She is working, with Malcolm Bradbury, on *A History of American Literature*, to be published by Methuen and Houghton Mifflin.

G. S. Fraser is Reader in English at the University of Leicester. The author of studies of Dylan Thomas, Ezra Pound, Keith Douglas, Lawrence Durrell, and W. B. Yeats, his *Essays on Twentieth Century Poets* was published in 1975 by Leicester University Press, and Open Books this year bring out his *Short History of English Poetry*.

Gerald Priestland is Religious Affairs Correspondent for the BBC. He previously spent many years overseas as Correspondent in Washington, New Delhi, Beirut and Paris. He is the author of several books, of which the latest is a collection of broadcast talks, *Yours Faithfully* (Collins Fount Paperbacks, 1979).

David Martin is Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics. His books include *The Dilemmas of Contemporary Religion* (1979) and *A General Theory of Secularization* (1978), both published by Blackwell. His articles in ENCOUNTER include "Dr Adorno's Bag of Tricks" (October 1976), "Remembering Karl Mannheim" (October 1975), and "The Naked Person" (June 1973).

In the June issue of ENCOUNTER, in the box "Tongue-Tied Americans in a Polyglot World" (p. 50), the author was given as Fred M. Hechringei. He is, of course, Fred M. Hechinger of the *International Herald Tribune*, and the Editors very much regret the printing error which produced this strange transformation.

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Life & Letters Today

London

BRA MITZVAH: *The TV-Aeschylus leaves the impression that the heyday of the house of Atreus was an era rich in synthetic fabrics [Clive James writes]. Dressed simultaneously as the Last of the Mohicans and the First of the Martians, Agamemnon sported a Sam Browne belt, leather pedal-pushers, dreadlocks and a fringe. For the purpose of going away to the war and coming back afterwards, he was equipped with a suit of armour that strongly suggested American football. Perhaps the Trojan war had been transferred to the Rose Bowl.*

Aegisthus also had a bulky carapace, which he seldom took off. It was studded with large nails, or small bollards. These made it very difficult for him to sit down. To prove this the producer made him sit down as often as possible. The top girls looked no less remarkable. As Klytemnestra, Diana Rigg had a wardrobe of Pocahontas numbers for day wear. They came with a complete range of Inca, Aztec and Zulu accessories. But it was en grande tenue *that she really knocked you out. The bodice of her evening gown featured a gold motif that circled each breast before climbing ceilingwards behind her shoulders like a huge menorah. It was a bra mitzvah.*

THE OBSERVER

Kansas City

CENSORSHIP: Censorship of books in U.S. school libraries has increased during the last decade, according to the censorship committee of the National Council of Teachers of English. A recent survey of 2,000 schools showed that 30% censored books, school newspapers or other materials. A similar survey in 1965 showed that 20% of the schools exercised censorship.

The Texas School Book Commission banned several standard dictionaries from all Texas schools because they contained objectionable words. Some were banned because the definition of the word bed included a reference to sexual intercourse.

Among the books removed or barred from school libraries were: "Catcher in the Rye", "Go Ask Alice", "Of Mice and Men", "The Grapes of Wrath", "A Separate Peace", "The Diary of Anne Frank", "To Kill a Mockingbird", "The Scarlet Letter", "1984", and the Bible. The most common reasons cited for removing books was sexual frankness, profanity, obscenity and bad grammar.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

Wakefield

HOW TO MISS THE BUS: *Youngsters who were often late arriving for work puzzled officials in charge of a community industry project. Then the reason for the bad time-keeping was discovered: the youngsters were missing their buses because they could not read the destination boards. They were too embarrassed to ask the conductor where the bus was going and were walking to work.*

A survey showed that many of the 100 youngsters aged between 16 and 19 engaged on the community industry project in Wakefield were illiterate.

More than 80% of the 50 youngsters tested had a reading age of between 6 and 12 years old. And if the other half had not been absent from work when the survey was taken the standard would have been even lower. Wakefield Education officials may now send a teacher to give the youngsters lessons during their tea breaks at work.

Mr Peter Lowes, community industry area manager, said: "It is incredible. We have severe problems getting people from home to work because they can't read the bus destination signs. These youngsters were absentees from school in the first place, but we want to be able to get them into a situation where they can fill in a form for a job application. They will not go back to school because they are too embarrassed."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

REST IS SILENCE: My father once told me that he had never seen a play or film that did not contain the words "Try and get some rest." This seems to be borne out by my own observation. In fact, waiting to spot this phrase can make almost anything worth watching!

THE LISTENER

London

SPIRIT OF THE LAWS: *Most of us know about Parkinson's Law, and most Americans know about Murphy's Law* **("If anything can go wrong it will")**, *but this month the American publishing world gains a new informal "law":* **"If one book comes out on a given subject, three books come out on that subject."**

In fact, three simultaneous books on the subject of—yes—"Laws" by different authors and from three different publishers have just appeared. There is "The Official Rules", by Paul Dickson; "The Book of Laws", by Harold Faber; and "1,001 Logical Laws, Accurate Axioms, Profound Principles, Trusty Truisms, Homey Homilies, Colourful Corollaries, Quotable Quotes, and Rambunctious Ruminations for All Walks of Life", by John Peers.

Mr Dickson first got interested in the subject of laws when he discovered that the size of the cut he inflicted upon himself while shaving was directly proportional to the importance of the event he was shaving for. Put that in capitals and you have Dickson's Law.

We learn from Mr Dickson of Agnes Allen's law— **"Almost anything is easier to get into than out of"**, *and Boozer's Revision:* **"A bird in the hand is dead."** *He reminds us, too, of Dean Martin's Definition of Drunkenness:* **"You're not drunk if you can lie on the floor without holding on."**

Mr Peers's Laws, as befitting the president of the Logical Machine Corporation, tend to be more serious. **"There is no direct relationship between the quality of an education programme and its cost."**

*Then there is Caen's Law—***"All American cars are basically Chevrolets"***—and Chamberlain's Law:* **"Everything tastes more or less like chicken."**

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

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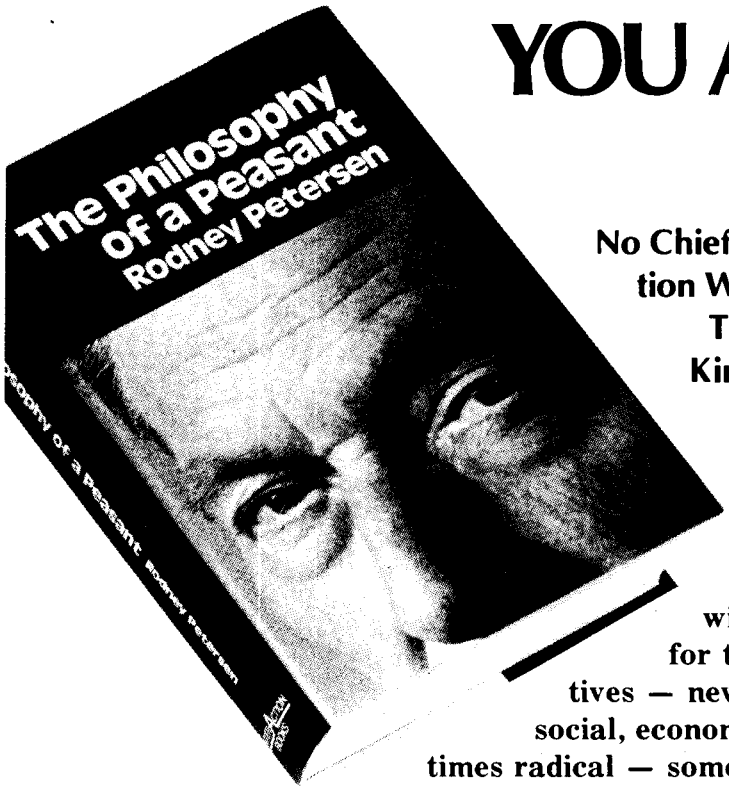

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